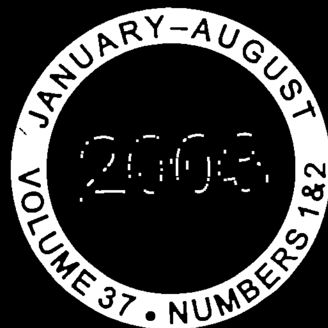
ecial Issue

igration, Modernity and Social Transformation in South Asia

uest Editors

ippo Osella and Katy Gardner



Contributions to Indian Sociology

Contributions to Indian Sociology is sponsored by the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, and published by Sage Publications, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, CA, and London—in February, June and October Copyright © Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. All rights reserved. No portion of the contents may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the publisher

This journal was founded by Louis Dumont and David Pocock in 1957 but ceased publication in 1966. The new series was started the following year as an annual publication, was published biannually from 1975 to 1998, and became a triannual publication from 1999

ISSN: 0069–9667

Subscriptions: Regular institutional rate is Rs 940, £109, $174. Individuals may subscribe at a one-year rate of Rs 520, £38, $61. Single copy Rs 375, £37, $59 (institutions) and Rs 210, £14, $21 (individuals). For orders from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, SAARC rates apply—institutional sub-scribers $34 per year, single issue $14; individual subscribers $22 per year, single issue $11 Orders from the Americas should be sent to Sage Publications Inc, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320, USA (Tel: 00 800 818 7243/00 805 499 9774/e-mail order@sagepub.com) Orders from the UK, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Australasia should be sent to Sage Publications Ltd, 6 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PU, UK (Tel: 00 44 20 7374 0645/Fax: 00 44 20 7330 1200/e-mail: subscription@sagepub.co.uk).

Postage: Subscribers in India, Nepal and Bhutan: please add postage of Rs 75 at the rate of Rs 25 per issue. This rate covers ordinary post, local couriers and hand deliveries. Delivery by registered mail or by out-station courier will be charged on actuals. Subscribers in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and other neighbouring countries: please add postage of US $6 at the rate of US $2 per issue.

Back Issues: Information about the availability and prices of back issues may be obtained from the publishers.

Inquiries: Address all permission requests and subscription correspondence to Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, B-42, Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi 110 017 (Tel/Fax: 91-11-26491290/e-mail. sage@vsnl.com or journalsubs@indiasage.com). Inquiries from the Americas should be sent to the California address (above), while those from the UK, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Australasia should be sent to the London address (above). For the editorial office, see inside back cover

Authorisation to photocopy items for internal or personal use of specific clients in the United States of America is granted by Sage Publications Inc. for libraries and other users registered with the Copyright Clearance Centre (CCC), Transactional Reporting Service, provided that the base fee of (US) 25 ¢ per copy page, is paid directly to CCC, 21 Congress Street, Salem, Massachusetts 01970, USA (0069-9667/83$.25x.10).

Advertising: Current rates and specifications may be obtained by writing to the New Delhi office (address above).

Claims: Claims for undelivered copies may be made no later than three months following the month of publication The publisher will supply missing copies when losses have been sustained in transit and when reserve stocks will permit.

Change of Address: Four weeks' advance notice must be given when notifying change of address. Please send the old address label to ensure proper identification. Please specify the name of the journal and send change of address notification to the Sage office through which you subscribe to the journal.

This journal is abstracted or indexed in **Current Contents/Social and Behavioural Sciences, Social Sciences Citation Index, ICSSR J. of Abs. and Rev. in Sociol. and Soc. Anthrop., Sociological Abstracts, International Current Awareness Service: Sociology, ASSIA: Applied Social Sciences Index & Abstracts, Anthropological Literature: an Index to Periodical Articles and Essays, Anthropological Index Online** and **Elsevier Geo Abstracts.**

Microform editions are available from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-13460.

Sage Publications
New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

301
C 768

Contributions to Indian Sociology

New Series

Volume 37 | Numbers 1&2 | January–August 2003

Special Issue
Migration, modernity and social transformation in South Asia

Guest Editors: **Filippo Osella** and **Katy Gardner**

13

CONTENTS

KATY GARDNER and FILIPPO OSELLA — **Migration, modernity and social transformation in South Asia: An overview** v

JONATHAN SPENCER — **A nation 'living in different places': Notes on the impossible work of purification in postcolonial Sri Lanka** 1

ROGER BALLARD — **A case of capital-rich under-development: The paradoxical consequences of successful transnational entrepreneurship from Mirpur** 25

FRANCIS WATKINS — **'Save there, eat here': Migrants, households and community identity among Pakhtuns in northern Pakistan** 59

EDWARD SIMPSON — **Migration and Islamic reform in a port town of western India** 83

Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella	**Migration and the commoditisation of ritual: Sacrifice, spectacle and contestations in Kerala, India**	109
C.Y. Thangarajah	**Veiled constructions: Conflict, migration and modernity in eastern Sri Lanka**	141
Maya Unnithan-Kumar	**Spirits of the womb: Migration, reproductive choice and healing in Rajasthan**	163
Arjan de Haan	**Calcutta's labour migrants: Encounters with modernity**	189
Jonathan P. Parry	**Nehru's dream and the village 'waiting room': Long-distance labour migrants to a central Indian steel town**	217
Geert De Neve	**Expectations and rewards of modernity: Commitment and mobility among rural migrants in Tirupur, Tamil Nadu**	251
Ben Rogaly, Daniel Coppard, Kumar Rana, Abdur Rafique, Amrita Sengupta and Jhuma Biswas	**Seasonal migration, employer-worker interactions, and shifting ethnic identities in contemporary West Bengal**	281
Randall Kuhn	**Identities in motion: Social exchange networks and rural-urban migration in Bangladesh**	311
Vinay Gidwani and K. Sivaramakrishnan	**Circular migration and rural cosmopolitanism in India**	339

Book reviews and notices *see page* 369

301.768 C

KP 2247

Contributions to Indian Sociology

Contributions to Indian Sociology (new series) is primarily a forum for the presentation of research studies on South Asian societies and cultures and for the discussion of different approaches to their study. Occasionally papers dealing with themes of cross-civilisational significance, bringing in data from non-South Asian societies, are also published. The journal does not generally accept purely theoretical essays or ethnographic surveys but favours papers in which theory and data are mutually related.

EDITORS
Dipankar Gupta, *Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi*
Patricia Uberoi, *Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi*

REVIEW EDITOR
Satish Deshpande, *Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi*

EDITORIAL ADVISORS
André Béteille, *Delhi*
Jan Breman, *University of Amsterdam*
Veena Das, *John Hopkins University, Baltimore*
Jayant Lele, *Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario*
T.N. Madan, *Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi*
Jonathan P. Parry, *London School of Economics and Political Science, London*
Michael Roberts, *University of Adelaide, Australia*
Thomas Trautmann, *University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*
Francis Zimmermann, *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences, Sociales, Paris*

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Aradhya Bharadwaj

Please note that all editorial correspondence should be addressed to:

The Editors
Contributions to Indian Sociology
Institute of Economic Growth
University Enclave
Delhi 110 007, INDIA
E-mail: cis@ieg.ernet.in
Fax: (91-11) 2766 7410

Migration, modernity and social transformation in South Asia: An overview

Katy Gardner and Filippo Osella

I
Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, migration has emerged as one of the key issues of the age. As the wealthiest states struggle to maintain intact what are in reality porous borders in a world which is increasingly interconnected, human movement—and in particular how it should be controlled—has become a major political issue. Within academic circles, too, the last decade has seen a proliferation of research projects, conferences and publications dedicated to the study of human movement. Here, the focus has tended to be upon international migration, with a growing emphasis upon how places and people are interconnected: transnationalism and globalisation are key buzz words, whilst James Clifford has

---

Katy Gardner and Filippo Osella are at the University of Sussex, School of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies, Falmer, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 9SJ, UK.

Acknowledgements: This volume is based upon a workshop held at the University in Sussex in January 2001, entitled 'Migration and modernities in South Asia'. We are grateful for the financial support given to this event by the Centre for Migration Studies and the Social Anthropology Subject Group, University of Sussex. We would like to thank a number of people who helped us along the way, in particular Ralph Grillo, Ann Whitehead, David Mosse, Geert De Neve, Caroline Osella and John Harriss, who provided invaluable comments to the editors and contributors to this volume. A heartfelt thank you also to all those who gracefully agreed—at very short notice!—to act as anonymous referees; and to Roger Smedley for the copy editing. Finally, a special thanks to Jock Stirrat, who has encouraged us throughout this project.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

suggested that the study of travel, rather than settlement, may be a more useful way of understanding cultural meanings (Appadurai 1997; Bhabha 1994; Clifford 1997; Gilroy 1993; cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1992).

Yet despite this upsurge of interest, our knowledge of particular aspects of migration remains patchy. We know that people are on the move, but as yet have little detailed ethnography concerning the effects this has on local areas or individual lives. Indeed, there has been a startlingly northern bias in much research which, whilst focusing largely upon the places which 'receive' overseas migrants and where diasporic communities are constituted (in Europe and North America in particular),[1] generally has little to say about the places which they leave behind. And even if there is theoretical acknowledgement that places are interconnected and that few migrants ever really do completely leave their places of origin, what this *means* in terms of cultural or social change in particular places has been little examined.

Meanwhile, other aspects and types of migration have fallen almost entirely off the agenda. In different times and geographical contexts, rural to urban movement was the subject of intense scrutiny and debate: in the 1950s and '60s, a whole school of work developed to examine the social and cultural changes associated with the movement of migrants within Southern Africa to the Copperbelt, for example. But—with a handful of honourable exceptions—within contemporary social anthropology and sociology there is currently a resounding silence on internal migration in South Asia, despite irrefutable evidence that movement, both within rural areas and between villages, towns and cities, has always been, and continues to be, a central feature of life within the subcontinent. Instead, the larger part of research in these areas tends to be carried out by demographers, economists, geographers and urban planners.

Not only is internal migration within South Asia of huge social, political and of course economic significance, but its effects and meanings are also strikingly similar to movements across national borders. Indeed, what seems to distinguish the different cases described in this volume is not so much *where* migrants move to (although this is of course important to the ideas, practices and goods which they bring back), but the conditions of life and employment which they experience when they get there. Temporary labour migration to the Gulf states of West Asia thus emerges

[1] For a recent comprehensive review of the literature on the South Asian diaspora generally, see Sandhya Shukla 2001.

as directly comparable to temporary migration from a rural area to an industrial city such as Calcutta or Bhilai although, as we shall see, the different conditions experienced in these cities have a central role in determining the relationships which migrants have both with each other, and with their places of origin. In focusing overly upon movement which transverses and transgresses national boundaries, then, we are in danger of failing to recognise important social and historical continuities between different types of migration, as well as prioritising contact with foreign countries (often Europe or North America) as the major agent of cultural change. Indeed, in the final article in the volume, Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan describe what they term 'rural cosmopolitanism', arguing that migrants who move internally in South Asia are just as cosmopolitan, and have just as much cultural effect as those who move from country to country. Clearly, in discussing migration in South Asia, we must beware of simplistic and taken-for-granted oppositions. Rural and urban, internal and overseas movements, traditional and modern: all of these oppositions are deeply problematic.

Moreover, while contemporary migration is often presented as a direct corollary of processes of modernisation, one must recognise that people have always moved within the subcontinent. This point has been made elsewhere by historians and sociologists, but nevertheless is often forgotten. What emerges from many of the articles in this volume is, however, an insight into the historical rootedness of contemporary migrations. Whilst the technologies of movement have changed, allowing for greater distances to be covered more quickly and by more people, the descriptions which follow echo Ron Inden's critique of classical anthropology's representation of a sedentary and stable 'village India' (Inden 1990; see also Breman 1988; Dewey 1972). Indeed, as historians have convincingly argued, in pre-colonial India spatial mobility was as prevalent as sedentarism; early colonialism forced a process of 'peasantisation' (Washbrook 1988), that is, the progressive settlement into agriculture of otherwise mobile groups/communities (Ludden 1996: 108; see also Ahuja 1998; Bayly 1983; Ludden 1985; Washbrook 1993). While 19th-century colonial economy's requirements of a mobile labour force for plantations and industrial centres produced sizeable and substantially new patterns of migration,[2] recent studies have suggested more continuities than breaks

[2] For discussions of Indian indentured labour in plantations, see Baak 1997; Breman 1989; Daniel et al. 1992; Kelly 1991.

between pre-modern and modern migration (see, e.g., Haynes and Roy 1999).

For their part, sporadic ethnographic studies of migration in South Asia have followed wider theoretical debates on migration. These are often nested in an early leaning towards modernisation theories, where migration is either a modern phenomenon disrupting (either positively or negatively) bounded and substantially sedentary rural communities, or is presented as a means through which modern values and practices enter the lives of an otherwise conservative rural population (see, e.g., Béteille 1965; Desai 1964; Dube 1955; Kessinger 1974; Saberwal 1976; Srinivas 1966; Vatuk 1972). In some studies, however, migration does not challenge 'primordial' rural identities, their persistence accounting, for example, for industrial workers'—and urban migrants' more generally—alleged lack of commitment to industrial work and continuous attachment to their rural homes (see, e.g., Holmström 1976; Klass 1978; Sheth 1968; see De Neve in this volume for a critical review of the debate). Later work stresses a concern for wider structural determinations as highlighted in dependency or world system theories: here unequal structural relations between sending and receiving contexts determine the processes of migration which are central to capitalist development (see, e.g., Breman 1996; Connell et al. 1976; Omvedt 1980). More recently, the stress is upon flows, contingency and agency.

In ethnographies published in the last fifteen years, migration is not presented as an irreversible choice, for a large number of practices are available between the two extremes of going away forever or never moving (see, e.g., Breman 1996; Chandavarkar 1994; de Haan 1994; Racine 1997). This in turn points to the flows and complex webs of economic and social relations of co-dependency which tie together different rural areas, rural and urban localities, *desh* and *bidesh* (see, e.g., Banks 1992, 1994; Gardner 1993b, 1995; Hansen 2001; Kurien 1994). One of the main themes arising from this work is the ambiguous nature of migration. For example, it might become an essential means of accumulation of economic and symbolic resources, which can be mobilised as part of wider projects of social mobility spanning individual households or whole communities (Ballard 1983, 1988, 1989; Chopra 1995; Gamburd 2000; Gardner 1995; Osella and Osella 2000a); alternatively, however, it is also often used to reinforce existing hierarchies (Lefebvre 1999). While the decision to migrate is normally taken within a large social group—migrants rely on financial and practical support provided by networks of

kin, friends, neighbours, etc.—migration at times stretches the boundaries between the fulfilment of personal/individual ambitions and wider social responsibilities (Osella and Osella 1999, 2000b). The effects on women are equally unclear. Under global capitalism, the majority of migrants are exposed to fundamentally exploitative relations of production, but recent studies show that for women migrants, access to salaried employment might be an empowering experience, allowing them to renegotiate—and in some cases to challenge—existing gender relations (see, e.g., Gamburd 2000; Gulati 1993; Kabeer 2000; Siddiqui 2001). Women's work—from paid employment to servicing of networks—might be central to the success of migrant households' social mobility strategies (Mascarenhas-Keyes 1986; Sharma 1986). Migration, however, might also lead to the introduction of stricter gender segregation and heightened notions of female respectable behaviour (see, e.g., Gardner 1995; Lefebvre 1999). Therefore, throughout these recent ethnographies, migration emerges as an ambiguous experience with winners and losers, bringing benefits and prospects of mobility for some, but increasing inequality and dependency for others. Finally, one of the most important themes which underscores studies of migration in South Asia is the relationship between population mobility and modernity, however defined. As we shall see, this, and many others of the issues discussed above, are picked up in a variety of ways by the articles which follow.

This volume, then, is an attempt to fill some of the gaps in existing research on migration within South Asia, a gargantuan task at which of course we can only make an initial stab. The primary approach of most of our contributors is anthropological and sociological. Whilst remaining dubious about the analytical value of the dichotomies of 'here' and 'there', the articles which follow are based upon material gathered from within South Asia, for we are convinced that in order to understand the meanings which globalisation and migration have in the contemporary world, and the ways in which they are embedded in particular histories and cultures, we need detailed ethnography from particular places and communities. We also need historical data, as well as research which is based in multiple settings. With a few exceptions (Spencer, de Haan and Parry, for example) the majority of our contributors have not been able to do the former, whilst all have based their discussions around one prime research site. We trust that readers will forgive us our limitations, and that others will follow suit to produce the research which is currently so lacking.

II
Themes and observations: Modernity, modernisation and mobility

Whilst recognising historical continuities, it is worth noting that the contexts of migration from and within South Asia in the last 100 years are specific to a range of historical as well as cultural and economic conditions. In planning this volume, we thought that this might be summarised under the term 'modernity', but it soon became clear that there are so many potential meanings and practices associated with the term that it might become increasingly unwieldy (evidenced by the impossibility of agreement on its defining characteristics or time-scale; see, e.g., Washbrook 1997: 410–13). But at the same time, throwing away 'modernity' as a useless abstraction or undefinable category with which anthropologists are unable to engage (*pace* Englund and Leach 2000; cf. Kahn 2001) ignores its salience in the lives of those with whom we work. In South Asia—as elsewhere—different understandings of 'modernity-as-development' have been co-opted into diverging political and economic projects, promoted by state governments, entrepreneurs, reform movements and development theorists alike: from barefaced colonial or capitalist 'modernisation', to postcolonial projects of socialist transformation through industrialisation, democracy, secularism and social justice (see, e.g., Chatterjee 1986, 1993; Corbridge and Harriss 2000; Khilnani 1997). But alongside—and in a dialogue with—these master-narratives of modernity, we believe that ideas, hopes and dreams of something called 'modernity' and 'progress' are continually appealed to in people's economic endeavours, political projects and identity crafting (Ferguson 1999: 14ff; Mills 1999a: 17ff; Osella and Osella n.d.). It is here, at the interstices of practice and representation of popular and institutional narratives, that we find an intimate relation between aspirations to 'modernity' and migration as a vehicle for their possible realisation; in other words between spatial and social mobility (cf. Saberwal 1976). Indeed as De Neve points out in his article, the prospects for mobility themselves constitute what modernity stands for in many parts of the world. Thus, while economic considerations might shape or constrain migration, decisions to migrate are embedded in wider notions of progress and mobility, exceeding simple economic motivations (Johnson 1998; Mills 1999b: 33–34; see also Uchiyamada 2000).

It may be useful at this point to disentangle 'modernisation', as a descriptive term referring to actual processes, from 'modernity', as a number of—often overlapping—socially located discourses which try to apprehend and direct such processes.[3] In the former, the changes which are taking place are quantifiable and include rapid and rampant urbanisation, industrialisation and the changing terms of employment with which it is often (although not always) associated; the establishment of the modern nation-state; and access to new technologies of travel which make mass movement across huge distances easier and quicker (see, e.g., Giddens 1990; Turner 1990). And these changes are taking place within the countryside as well as cities. The dependence of modernising agriculture in West Bengal upon seasonal labourers from neighbouring states (described by Rogaly et al., this volume) is as great as that of cities such as Bhilai or Calcutta, or the Gulf states, upon industrial workers.

A key question which emerges from this is the relationship between processes of economic development and migration. Clearly, as the history of global capital makes plain, economic development is often dependent upon the mass recruitment of labour from other places, usually for the dirtiest and most lowly paid jobs. The post-war reconstruction of Britain and the modernisation of the Gulf states are just two obvious examples. We cannot, however, assume that the benefits of this are felt both in those places which receive and those which send migrants, although this largely depends on each particular context. This is illustrated by Roger Ballard's discussion of the changes associated with prolonged out-migration from Mirpur to Britain and the Gulf. Whilst there has been a boom in house building and conspicuous consumption amongst migrant households in Mirpur, Ballard argues that there has been little sustained development of agriculture or industry in the area. To this extent, economic modernisation—in a formal sense—has only been skin-deep: besides the building of mostly empty houses as 'monuments' to departed migrants and increased spending on imported consumer goods, the only real economic change which has taken place is that the region has become more dependent upon foreign countries. Ballard's article leads us to the second point. As well as being a process, modernity can also be analysed as discourse: a set of imaginings and beliefs about the way life should be, as well as a host of associated practices. To this extent, the house

[3] This point was made by Professor Ralph Grillo at the Sussex workshop.

building projects in which Mirpuris engage are less about the modernisation of their communities *per se* (i.e., the improvement of local infrastructure, the provision of schools or medical facilities, or investment into local businesses or agriculture), and more about migrants' projects of self-transformation, in which their houses and the other consumer goods displayed within them are presented as strikingly different and modern. Consumption plays a central role in such projects, an important theme to which we shall return shortly.

What also becomes clear in a number of ethnographic examples is that what it means to be 'modern' is not always the same. Here it is not just that modernity is experienced in different ways by different people, as Arjan de Haan points out with reference to Calcutta, but also that what constitutes modernity is not fixed. Geert De Neve similarly suggests that modernity is both a contradictory and an ambiguous process of change. Amongst the Gujarati sailors described by Ed Simpson or the households of Sri Lankan women working as maid-servants in the Gulf described by Yuvaraj Thangarajah, for instance, 'being modern' involves an engagement with a more orthodox form of Islam as expressed both by changing religious practices and new forms of consumption. In other cases, 'being modern' involves different forms of employment and political engagement. For the migrants described by Jonathan Parry in Bhilai, for example, their involvement in industrial work seems to be part of conscious projects of transformation, whilst in De Neve's discussion of rural migrants to Tirupur, favourable terms and conditions of employment in the weaving industry allow them to be more 'committed' as workers than their urban counterparts.

Although a distinguishing feature of the above cases appears to be an attempt to escape from 'traditional' social and economic structures, we must be wary of assuming that migrants are necessarily dedicated to such changes. Amongst the Pakhtun migrants described by Francis Watkins, for example, modernity entails both a rejection of what are perceived to be 'western values', and an emphasis on the importance of community equality and the Brotherhood of Islam. Whilst we cannot, therefore, generalise about what 'being modern' might involve, what seems common to many of the articles is a concern with projects of transformation, whether carried out by the state, by particular ethnic or religious groups involved in migration, or by individual migrants. Within these projects, we can identify both discourses about what it may mean to be modern, as well as actual processes which may be best described as 'modernising'. The

key point is that migration—whether through exposure to the new places and ideas which it involves, or changed levels of income or consumption—is somehow embedded in all these projects.

III
The role of the state

An important question which arises from the above observations is what role the state might play in these processes. In his thought-provoking article on what he terms 'the impossible work of purification' in colonial and postcolonial Sri Lanka, Jonathan Spencer examines the relationship between population movement and political modernity. As he argues, the 'modern' state is highly keen to manage population movements, but there is often a major contradiction between the economic need for migrant labour and the political need to control movement. This is also illustrated by Ben Rogaly et al.'s discussion of the mass seasonal influx of agricultural labour into West Bengal from neighbouring areas. A second point made by Spencer's article is that migration might, in some circumstances, be associated with political avoidance. Whilst such perspectives are of particular pertinence to the study of refugees and asylum seekers (a category of migrants not discussed in this volume), the ways in which people migrate in order to escape from oppressive social and political relationships is an important theme of several of our articles. In Maya Unnithan-Kumar's discussion of slum women in Jaipur, for example, she shows how many of the women have moved to the city from rural areas in order to escape indebtedness, as well as the restrictive demands of extended families. At the same time, in their movement to the slums, women are also avoiding the state and its highly oppressive attempts to control their bodies.

IV
Migration's challenge to existing social relations

Migration may be part of a strategy to avoid not only the state, but also other relationships. As mentioned earlier, indebtedness may be part of this, as shown by Unnithan-Kumar, as well as Randall Kuhn's description of rural to urban migrants in Bangladesh. Indeed, one theme common to nearly all the articles is the way in which spatial disruption challenges

and relativises existing social relations.[4] Even if this is not always the intended effect, the exposure to new places, ideas and practices which migrants experience often seems to lead to a questioning of existing forms of hierarchy or a reinvention of the self's place within the social order. This may be the result of changed living or working conditions in the places which people migrate to. Crucially too, migrants may reap great economic rewards, at least relative to those who stayed put. Their earnings may in turn help to transform the bases of local class and status relations, as well as introducing new forms of consumption or ritual practice, also associated with attempts to gain status, or challenge the existing bases of status. Once again, however, we cannot assume that change takes place in a certain direction, or that mobility necessarily leads to certain types of relationship or behaviour. Let us start by considering the effect which migration appears to have on relationships between different social groups, an exercise already undertaken by anthropologists in earlier decades, albeit in different settings.

Beyond the melting pot?[5] Examples from South Asia

Several of the articles in this volume describe the relationship between migration and relations between distinct ethnic, religious or regional groups. What we see is that whilst no group remains unchanged, what is all-important to how they maintain or abandon existing loyalties or affiliations is the historical, economic and political preconditions of migration. In his account of migration into the industrial city of Bhilai, for example, Jonathan Parry describes informants who appear to have made a sharp break with their villages and for whom regional or ethnic identities are no longer of great significance. Significantly too, migrants appear committed to an idea of 'modern' life as employees of one of India's post-independence beacons of progress and modernity.

Parry's material stands in contrast to that of several other articles which point to increased particularism amongst migrants within urban India, and to strong on-going links with their villages. As Arjan de Haan argues, the various groups of migrants to Titagarh, in Calcutta, have multiple and complex engagements with industrial employment in the city. Migrants maintained close links with their original villages, and throughout

[4] This point was brought to us by Ann Whitehead's concluding comments at the Sussex workshop.

[5] This phrase was used in the title of Glazer and Moynihan's classic volume on ethnicity and urbanisation, published in 1964 (see Glazer and Moynihan 1964).

the 20th century never fully or irreversibly settled in the city: to this extent, they are the 'rural cosmopolitans' of Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan's article and are also strikingly similar to transnational migrants (see Basch et al. 1994). Similar observations are made by Ben Rogaly et al. Their article provides a picture of people on the move, this time in rural West Bengal. Here, agricultural production is rapidly modernising under capitalist production and depends upon the seasonal influx of migrants from surrounding districts. Regional, religious and class affiliations are used by both labourers and employers in negotiations around the terms of employment. Through migration and the interactions which it involves, self-identifications as well as spatial affiliations are constantly shifting; neither spatial or social locations are fixed.

Migration and social hierarchy: Religious practice and ritual

Many of the articles examine what happens to the social relations in the places migrants have (temporarily) left behind. What we see here is that migration is often associated not only with intense competition between social groups, but also that this often involves an undermining of the traditional bases of status and hierarchy. Religious practice and consumption tend to be key to this process; as migrants and their families reinvent themselves as high status members of their communities, how they worship and how they spend their earnings—activities which are often closely linked—tend to take centrestage. Here, whilst the similarities with processes of 'Sanskritisation' described in earlier decades are striking (Srinivas 1966), the ideologies and practices upon which such reinventions are based often originate in foreign lands and are part and parcel of wider processes of religious reformism, which draw upon global networks and associations and attempt to homogenise religious practice. Thus Ed Simpson describes how Muslim sailors and (low status) ship owners in the port town of Mandvi, in Gujarat, return from their travels abroad to challenge the existing bases of status and social differentiation, blood and birth. Drawing upon international webs of Muslim connections, they now engage in a more orthodox, modernised form of Islam which rejects the saints and shrines of the old order (see also Gardner 1993a). In a similar vein, Filippo and Caroline Osella's article examines processes of ritual change in Kerala, showing how newly-moneyed (and low caste) Gulf migrants use public ritual to express and sanction their new-found wealth and status, while the old high caste elite attempts to de-legitimise their efforts by setting 'tradition' as the yardstick against which the

newcomers' performances are judged, deriding the lower caste performances as vulgar and untraditional. High caste 'traditionalists' who attempt to standardise and record correct versions of the ritual are, however, engaged in activities just as modern as those of new-moneyed migrants who openly opt for innovation and change. In Yuvaraj Thangarajah's article, religious reformism involves significant changes in the styles of dress and behaviour amongst women. In rural Eastern Sri Lanka, the wages of poor Muslim women who have migrated to the Gulf to work as maids contribute to attempts to consolidate middle-class status, a process involving the emulation of orthodox Islamic codes and Arab styles of dress. Religious reformism is again part of a process of social mobility amongst returned migrants and their households, and is linked to a claim to modernity. Here the 'modern' resides in the styles and practices of wealthy West Asian Gulf states, and close association with such places—through the use of consumer goods acquired there—is intrinsically linked to an improved status.

Migration and consumption

These examples show once again how consumption is central to migrants' attempts to reinvent themselves. Goods which migrants bring home also involve imaginings of foreign places and the type of modernity (or lack thereof) supposed to be found there, regardless of whether this is expressed through prayer rugs or other religious artefacts brought from the Gulf, or consumer durables such as cassette recorders, motorbikes or cosmetics. Just as the display of suitably authentic 'ethnic' artefacts in the homes of middle-class Europeans indicates that their owners have enjoyed interesting and exotic experiences amongst the 'traditional peoples of the Third World', so the display of particular sorts of goods from Europe or the Gulf in South Asia indicates that their owners have been in close contact with places perceived as modern and cosmopolitan. House building is often an inherent part of the transformation of migrants' local status. Whilst in Sri Lanka the brick houses built by maid-servants' remittances are places to be lived in, as Roger Ballard shows in the case of Mirpur, many of the houses built by migrants are in fact empty, used only during brief trips back to Pakistan by people who have settled mainly in the UK. Rather than serving any practical purpose, the vast two or three storey houses which dominate the Mirpur landscape are monuments to departed families, asserting their status as wealthy and thoroughly

modern, and attempting to establish a presence in the face of prolonged absence.

A note of caution, however. Whilst consumption—of new types of houses, rituals or fashion—is clearly deeply embedded in migrants' projects of transformation, we should not assume that it is necessarily used ostentatiously to pull rank over others so as to mark a distinction. Indeed, as Francis Watkins reminds us, it is important to understand local discourses of consumption before coming to any conclusion about what particular patterns of consumption may mean. In the Pakhtun village of Kohery (North-West Frontier, Pakistan)—an area highly dependent upon the seasonal male labour migration to the Gulf—migration involves two interdependent discourses. Whilst abroad, male migrants are presented as suffering and selfless men of faith, who save as much as possible in order that their households back in the village may 'eat' their earnings. Meanwhile, back home, saving is discouraged; remittances are invested in house building and social relationships. Associated with this is a strong discourse of equality, whereby spending is 'carefully uncontrolled', giving the impression that individuals are neither misers, nor greedy and overly competitive (see also Osella and Osella 2000b). A point to be borne in mind—and this is pertinent to all our articles—is that we need to carefully distinguish between the *rhetorics* of migration and its actual outcomes, even if these are closely intertwined. Migrants' narratives of suffering, or of equality, may be viewed as part of wider constructions of the self and society. In the Kohery example, these constructions may in turn be linked to religious change engendered through migration, wherein returned migrants were bringing back reformist ideologies of the egalitarian brotherhood of Islam.

Gender, generation and the household

The movement of people to new places, whether single women or men or entire families, invariably has a profound effect upon the more intimate relationships within households, especially when those movements involve an increased engagement with the discourses and processes of modernity. The ways in which household relations, and more generally gender relations, are destabilised through migration have, however, only received a small amount of attention, at least in South Asia (see Chant 1992; Gardner 1995, 1998; Patel 2001; Wills and Yeoh 2000). And yet gender is one of the most important axes along which encounters with new places and the modernity they may represent differ. The effects of

movement are, however, complex, difficult to predict, and depend upon each different context. For Darana women in Jaipur for instance (Unnithan-Kumar, this volume), movement from their villages has engendered greater physical freedom and allowed them to escape oppressive economic relationships of indebtedness, as well as the constrictive nature of their extended families. In the city, however, they experience even greater workloads, even if they have more direct and possibly more equal relationships with their husbands. In contrast, in Calcutta, de Haan argues that many women experienced greater physical restrictions in the cramped conditions of urban housing. Meanwhile in the rural areas, male out-migration involved an increasing feminisation and devaluation of agriculture.

When women move independently of their families to take up salaried employment, the effects are equally complex. Whilst such migration may entail an exposure to new ideologies of what it means to be a woman as well as access to wage-earning opportunities (which is not the same as control over their wages), how this could affect gender relations is, again, impossible to predict (cf. Kabeer 2000). Yuvaraj Thangarajah, for example, describes how, when Muslim women from eastern Sri Lanka migrate to the Gulf, they return not only with high status consumer goods and money to build houses, but also with orthodox Islamic views concerning women's seclusion. Whilst the adoption of orthodox Islamic practices may be read as a sign of increased oppression, we must beware of hasty judgements, for the women in Thangarajah's account appear to be active agents in the processes of Islamisation, gaining status through their new, pious behaviour. The evidence from Sylhet in Bangladesh is strikingly similar. Here, the transnational migration of families to the UK as well as single men to the Gulf is associated with increased Islamic orthodoxy within the migrants' villages of origin. However, as Katy Gardner (1998) has argued, while the women in migrant households practise significantly higher levels of seclusion than those in non-migrant households, it would be a mistake to believe that poorer, non-migrant women enjoy greater autonomy or empowerment within their households or the wider community. Rather, they are oppressed by poverty, whilst women in the more Islamic orthodox households enjoy far greater public status and better material conditions.

Like gender, generation and age have a profound effect upon how migration is experienced by individuals. This in turn changes historically, a point which Arjan de Haan makes. In Calcutta, for example, whilst young men used to enjoy a period of 'wandering around' the city before

becoming economically productive, today there is a far greater stress on educational achievement, which itself is linked to discourses of modernity. Movement also shakes up relationships between generations. Whilst this has been documented amongst South Asians within the 'receiving' context of Britain (see, e.g., Ballard 1994; Gardner 2002; Watson 1977), the ways in which this is taking place within the subcontinent are only beginning to be explored (see Cohen 1998). In several of the articles, there is evidence that migrants originally made their move as the result of family quarrels, and in particular, conflict between generations—another example of how migration may be interpreted as a strategy of avoidance. The implications this holds for ageing parents left behind is an important question that the situation gives rise to (cf. Kuhn 2000). In other instances, however, it is not so much that migration disrupts existing relations between generations, but more that it is tied to the life-cycle, so that movement marks the transition between adolescence and adulthood (see Osella and Osella 1999, 2000b). In Francis Watkins' Pakhtun case, for example, young men's migration to the Gulf allows them to accumulate the capital to become householders back in Pakistan; here narratives of suffering appear to be part of the process of reaching maturity. Similarly, young women in eastern Sri Lanka migrate in order to earn money for their dowries, and so that they can afford to build houses for prospective grooms. Not surprisingly, migrants who return from other types of destinations where they have the right of permanent settlement, tend to be nearing the end of their lives. Often this dream of return remains just that, but can still be understood as part of the ageing process, a myth which becomes increasingly important to migrants as they grow old. As Jonathan Parry shows, however, the dream of return is not shared by all migrants and is in part dependent upon the conditions of work and living found in the place of settlement. Here, the similarities between Bhilai's public sector employees and Roger Ballard's descriptions of British Mirpuris are striking.

V

Social networks and the connectedness of place

Along with changing social relations, migration also builds upon existing social links. The importance of networks has already been well documented in migration studies, as has the role of chains based on kinship and community in the movement of South Asians overseas. Several of the articles in this volume illustrate the mechanics of such networks, and

indicate strong on-going patterns of exchange and reciprocity with the places and groups involved. What they also show is that such patterns are always underlain with relations of power. They are also continually changing. Randall Kuhn shows how social links and patronage are vital for migrants moving from rural Bangladesh to Dhaka. Such links are crucial when it comes to gaining employment in the city in a context where desirable jobs and housing are in short supply, and patronage is a key economic and political resource. At the same time, the maintenance of relationships in rural areas provides valuable insurance in situations where migration is a high-risk strategy.

Within this context, Kuhn's article highlights two important points (see also Breman 1985, 1996). First, for those patrons who have already established themselves in the city, the benefits of on-going links with their villages, and of being powerful 'big-men' vis-a-vis their kinsmen or village neighbours may decline over time, especially if their power bases have shifted and they are no longer able to provide appropriate employment. Similarly, as Rogaly et al. observed in West Bengal, whilst clients may be keen to pursue the relationship, patrons may be wary of the obligations involved. The links between places and people are thus far from fixed: they may be used as an initial springboard for migration, but may also be cast aside once they serve no further purpose. Second, and crucially, not all migrants have access to such social networks. These socially isolated families and individuals are the most deprived, and move to the city less as a strategy of upward mobility and more because, unable to call upon the patronage of their more powerful rural neighbours, they have only limited (if any) access to local resources, and thus little choice. Here, we are reminded that migration is not necessarily the result of positive choice, but may be caused by strong 'push' factors, with individuals and families having little or no social capital to fall back on.

A third important point about the migrants' networks is made in Geert De Neve's article. Although within South Asia networks are usually discussed in terms of kinship, in Tirupur—in Tamil Nadu—they may also be based on friendships forged in the workplace, and on sharing and reciprocity. The sharing of skills and resources between friends proved invaluable in setting up business ventures. Similarly, in Bhilai, Parry describes how kinship- or village-based networks are of varying importance to different migrants. Thus, although social networks are invariably important in migrants' life histories, they are not always composed of 'primordial' links. Indeed, movement allows people to shun

links which they experienced as negative (as shown in Kuhn's and Unnithan-Kumar's accounts).

As this attention to networks shows, the locations between which migrants travel remain closely interconnected through flows of people, goods and ideas. There is thus no simple division of 'sending' and 'receiving' places, even if they are constructed as such by the migrants in their renewed stress on regional particularism (as in Rogaly et al.'s article, for example). Indeed, what is very obvious from a comparison of the articles included here is the extent and historical rootedness of migration within and out of South Asia, as well as the ways in which even the most isolated places are linked to the global and regional political economy.

Similarly, when associating the cities and foreign countries which migrants travel to with 'modernity', one must beware of considering the places they leave as 'traditional', for what we see here is that all places are part of the same processes, even if they play different roles. In this context, Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan's article on circular migration and rural cosmopolitanism in India is an important contribution to the volume. On the strength of fieldwork in both Gujarat and Tamil Nadu—and drawing on ethnographies presented in other articles in this volume—they attempt to rescue the notion of 'cosmopolitanism' from the otherwise underlying evolutionist assumptions that mark out, within unilinear hierarchies of progress, those who are already cosmopolitan from those who are 'not quite there yet'. Critical of conventional debates and definitions, Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan envisage cosmopolitanism as a more general—hence not particular to late modernity—condition of being in a state of flux, of living at close quarters with difference; a condition engendered by migration which might be just as characteristic of rural living as of life in metropolitan settings. Rural cosmopolitans, they argue, are those migrants who, during their lifetime, move back and forth between different (rural and/or urban) locations, straddling diverse political and cultural worlds, and deploying to their advantage expertise learned in one social context onto another. They are innovators who not only unsettle categorical boundaries between rural/urban or tradition/modernity, but also, as bearers of new styles, values and practices, continuously transform the social spaces they inhabit. Crucially, (circular) migrants have been central to the development of modern political subjectivities and of new regimes of production. Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan are careful to warn us that rural cosmopolitans' innovations are not necessarily progressive in orientation. In some instances, for example, experiences of

(circular) migration might lead to attempts to redefine local caste relationships through the adoption of new consumption styles, but in other cases they might equally lead to the introduction of practices reinforcing the existing social order. Like many other contributors to this volume, Gidwani and Sivaramakrisnan bring to our attention the transformative role of migration, while stressing the substantial ambiguity of social and cultural processes engendered by movements of people.

VI
Towards a conclusion: Transformation, ambiguity and power

What generalisations might we make concerning South Asian migration? The first point returns us to a remark made at the beginning of this introduction: migration involves far more than simple economic strategies and issues of material well-being. In all the cases included here, migration entails *projects of transformation*, either by individuals or groups or even states, in which new identities are being forged and existing orders either challenged or in some way changed. Yet whilst similar observations might be made concerning other processes of economic change within South Asia, what distinguishes our examples is that these projects all involve the politics of space and place. It is not just that the political economy of migration enables flows of resources from centres of capital into its peripheries, wherever these might be. Further, different places involve different ideas and ways of being. And because the flows of power between these places are rarely equal, such ways of being and the goods and practices which they involve become grafted onto both local and global hierarchies. The returned migrant, with his or her new goods, 'modern' ways and tendency to reform what is increasingly represented as 'traditional', is the embodiment of this geography of power, even as it is contested and refuted by those who stayed behind.

However, let us not fall into the utilitarian trap of assuming that such projects of transformation are always primarily to do with worldly status or power. One of the most intriguing features of many of our cases is that whilst migrants' worldly identities and relationships may be changing, so too are their spiritual ones. Here, movement into the wider world and the radical shifts in perception which this involves tend to shake up existing spiritual beliefs, especially when these are based on a narrow regionalism. In several cases, for example, migrants move away from an

Islam based on local shrines, saints and hierarchies, and engage in a new, global form of Islamic purism and brotherhood. Here, 'tradition' assumes a central role in struggles not only over status and power, but also in peoples' attempts to reformulate their relationship with God.

Just as the relationship between places is far from straightforward, so too are the motivations of migrants highly complex. Certainly, we cannot come to simple conclusions concerning their attitudes to or engagement with any sort of modernity, or indeed slip into the unthinking assumption that the town equals modernity whilst the village is equated with tradition, a point powerfully made by De Neve in his discussion of the relative levels of commitment to industrial employment on the part of rural migrants to Tirupur. Once again, so much seems to depend upon the contexts within which people lead their lives. In Tirupur, migrants' 'commitment' to the city remained high, if only because their terms of employment allowed them to return to their villages when they needed to. Similarly, whilst the industrial workers interviewed by Parry seem to have been actively seeking the life-style, income and economic security offered by Bhilai, the high wages, educational and health facilities and relative security found there probably were more influential than intellectual commitment to some abstract project of modernity. Meanwhile, Gulf migrants of Kohery described by Watkins are certainly involved in processes of change—who is not?—but whether or not they could be said to be buying into the forms of modernity discussed at the beginning of this introduction is far from certain. For others, such as the Sri Lankan maids of Thangarajah or the Gujarati ship owners of Simpson, travel and transformation involve an engagement with an entirely different form of modernity, based on Islam and religious purification.

What we *can* clearly say, however, is this: the hallmark of migration is its *ambiguity*. Even as migrants struggle to transform themselves and their families, they are torn between competing ideals: to separate their families and gain access to the power and resources of new places, or to remain together; to retain links with their villages or to break away from their often constrictive and burdensome obligations; to return or to stay. Similarly, the new ways of being, experiences and ideologies represented by the places which migrants move to and between very often seem to invoke highly ambivalent responses: witness the mixed messages we hear from the respondents of Rogaly et al.'s research. It is not simply that life is better in some ways but not in others; it is more that—at least in some cases—migrants cannot decide who they are or how they should

behave. This continual ambivalence, and the suffering it often involves, come across most clearly in the oral histories cited in some of the articles.

Finally, migration always involves *relations of power*, whether these are between states, cities and rural areas, or regions; between migrants and non- (or would-be-) migrants; or between individuals within a migrant's household or family. Underscoring all of these relationships is the global political economy and the weight of inequality as well as opportunity which this involves. Within this context, it is impossible to make generalisations concerning whether or not migrants and their places of origin benefit from the movement, for each case has to be carefully placed within its historical, political and economic context. Clearly migrants are not the passive dupes of structuralist theories of migration, but neither are they always the agents of their own destiny, making simple choices between costs and benefits, as some economic theory might suggest. Relationships between places are structured first and foremost by global capital, but within this framework there is a lot of room—literally and metaphorically—for movement. Thus, while migration occurs in the context of power relations between people and between localities which shape the circumstances of people's movements, at the same time, migrants continuously interpret, negotiate and subvert these constraints within the unfolding of specific migratory practices, the outcome of which cannot be predicted. Combined with this, the effects of migration are far from homogeneous, even within the same community or household. Do women migrants enjoy an enhanced status? Do the villages of migrants become more economically 'developed'? Is migration 'good' for South Asia? The only answer we can give—and we urge our readers to be cautious of those offering anything more solid than this—is that it depends.

REFERENCES

Ahuja, R. 1998. Labour unsettled: Mobility and protest in the Madras region, 1750–1800. *The Indian economic and social history review* 35, 4: 381–404.

Appadurai, A. 1997. Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. *In* A. Appadurai, ed., *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*, pp. 27–47. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Baak, P.E. 1997. *Plantation production and political power: Plantation development in Southwest India in a long term historical perspective, 1743–1963*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Ballard, R. 1983. The contexts and consequences of migration. Jullundur and Mirpur compared. *New community* 11, 1 & 2: 117–36.

BALLARD, R. 1988. The political economy of migration: Pakistan, Britain and the Middle East. *In* J. Eades, ed., *Migrants, workers, and the social order*, pp. 17–41. London: Tavistock.

———. 1989. Effects of labour migration from Pakistan. *In* H. Alavi and J. Harriss, eds., *The sociology of developing societies: South Asia*, pp. 112–22. London: Macmillan.

———, ed. 1994. *Desh pardesh: The South Asian presence in Britain.* London: Hurst and Company.

BANKS, M. 1992. *Organizing Jainism in India and England.* Oxford: Clarendon.

———. 1994. Why move? Regional and long distance migrations of Gujarati Jains. *In* J M. Brown and R. Foot, eds., *Migration: The Asian experience*, pp. 131–48. Oxford· St. Martin Press.

BASCH, L., N. GLICK-SCHILLER and C. SZANTON BLANC. 1994. *Nations unbound: Transnational projects, post-colonial predicaments and deterritorialised nation states.* Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach.

BAYLY, C.A. 1983. *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars: North Indian society in the age of British expansion, 1770–1870.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BETEILLE, A. 1965. *Caste, class and power: Changing patterns of stratification in a Tanjore village.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

BHABHA, H. 1994. *The location of culture.* London. Routledge.

BREMAN, J. 1985. *Of peasants, migrants and paupers.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1988. *The shattered image: Construction and deconstruction of the village in colonial Asia.* Comparative Asian Studies 2, Center for Asian Studies, Amsterdam. Dordrecht: Foris.

———. 1989. *Taming the Coolie Beast.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1996. *Footloose labour: Working in India's informal economy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CHANDAVARKAR, R. 1994. *The origins of industrial capitalism in India: Business strategies and the working classes in Bombay, 1900–1940.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CHANT, S., ed. 1992. *Gender and migration in developing countries.* London: Belhaven.

CHATTERJEE, P. 1986. *Nationalist thought and the colonial world: A derivative discourse?* London: Zed Books.

———. 1993. *The nation and its fragments: Colonial and postcolonial histories.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

CHOPRA, R. 1995. Maps of experience: Narratives of migration in an Indian village. *Economic and political weekly* 30, 49: 3156–62.

CLIFFORD, J. 1997. *Routes: Travel and translation in the late twentieth century.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

COHEN, L. 1998. *No ageing in India: Alzheimer's, the bad family and other modern things.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

CONNELL, J., B. DASGUPTA, R. LAISHLEY and M. LIPTON. 1976. *Migration from rural areas: The evidence from village studies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CORBRIDGE, S. and J. HARRISS. 2000. *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu nationalism and popular democracy.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

DANIEL, E.V., H. BERNSTEIN and T. BRASS, eds. 1992. *Plantations, peasants and proletarians in colonial Asia.* London: Cass.

DE HAAN, A. 1994. *Unsettled settlers: Migrant workers and industrial capitalism in Calcutta.* Rotterdam: Hilversum, Verloren.

DESAI, I.P. 1964. *The patterns of migration and occupation in a south Gujarat village.* Poona: Deccan College.

DEWEY, C. 1972. Images of the village community: A study in Anglo-Indian ideology. *Modern Asian studies* 6, 3: 291–328.

DUBE, S.C. 1955. *Indian village.* London: Routledge.

ENGLUND, H. and J. LEACH. 2000. Ethnography and the meta-narratives of modernity. *Current anthropology* 41, 2: 225–48.

FERGUSON, J. 1999. *Expectations of modernity: Myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

GAMBURD, M.R. 2000. *The kitchen spoon's handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's migrant housemaids.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

GARDNER, K. 1993a. Mullahs, migrants and miracles. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 27, 2. 213–35.

———. 1993b. Desh-bidesh: Sylheti images of home and away. *Man* 28, 1: 1–16.

———. 1995 *Global migrants, local lives: Travel and transformation in rural Bangladesh.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 1998. Women and Islamic revivalism in a Bangladeshi village. *In* P. Jeffery and A. Basu, eds., *Appropriating gender: Women's activism and politicized religion in South Asia*, pp. 203–21. New York: Routledge.

———. 2002. *Migration, age and narrative: Life histories and the life cycle amongst Bengali elders in London.* Oxford: Berg.

GIDDENS, A. 1990. *The consequences of modernity.* Cambridge: Polity.

GILROY, P. 1993. *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness.* London: Verso.

GLAZER, N. and D. MOYNIHAN, eds. 1964. *Beyond the melting pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York.* Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.

GULATI, L. 1993. *In the absence of their men.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

GUPTA, A. and J. FERGUSON. 1992. Beyond 'culture': Space, identity and the politics of difference. *Cultural anthropology* 7, 1: 6–23.

HANSEN, T.B. 2001. Bridging the Gulf: Global horizons, mobility and local identity among Muslims in Mumbai. *In* C. Bates, ed., *Community, empire and migration: South Asians in diaspora*, pp. 261–85. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

HAYNES, D.E and T. ROY. 1999. Conceiving mobility: Weavers' migrations in pre-colonial and colonial India. *The Indian economic and social history review* 36, 1: 35–67.

HOLMSTROM, M. 1976. *South Indian factory workers: Their life and their world.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

INDEN, R. 1990. *Imagining India.* Oxford: Blackwell.

JOHNSON, M. 1998. At home and abroad: Inalienable wealth, personal consumption and formulations of femininity in the southern Philippines. *In* D. Miller, ed., *Material culture*, pp. 215–40. London: UCL Press.

KABEER, N. 2000. *The power to choose: Bangladeshi women and labour market decisions in London and Dhaka.* London: Verso.

KAHN, J. 2001. Anthropology and modernity. *Current anthropology* 42, 5: 651–80.

KELLY, J.D. 1991. *A politics of virtue: Hinduism, sexuality and countercolonial discourse in Fiji.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Kessinger, T.G. 1974. *Vilyatpur 1848–1968. Social and economic change in a north Indian village*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Khilnani, S. 1997. *The idea of India*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Klass, M. 1978. *From field to factory: Community structure and industrialisation in West Bengal*. Philadelphia: ISHI.

Kuhn, R. 2000. The impact of nuclear family and individual migration on the elderly in rural Bangladesh: A qualitative analysis. Paper presented to Population Association of America meeting, 24 March 2000, Los Angeles, CA

Kurien, P.A. 1994. Non-economic bases of economic behaviour: The consumption, investment and exchange patterns of three emigrant communities in Kerala, India. *Development and change* 25, 4: 757–83.

Lefebvre, A. 1999. *Kinship, honour and money in rural Pakistan*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.

Ludden, D. 1985. *Peasant history in south India*. Princeton. Princeton University Press.

———. 1996. Caste, society and units of production in early modern south India. *In* B. Stein and S. Subrahmanyam, eds, *Institutions and economic change in South Asia*, pp. 105–33. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mascarenhas-Keyes, S. 1986. Death notices and dispersal: International migration among Catholic Goans. *In* J. Eades, ed., *Migrants, workers, and the social order*, pp. 82–98. London: Tavistock.

Mills, M.B. 1999a. *Thai women in the global labour force: Consuming desires, contested selves*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

———. 1999b. Migrant labor takes a holiday: Reworking modernity and marginality in contemporary Thailand. *Critique of anthropology* 19, 1: 31–51.

Omvedt, G. 1980. Migration in colonial India: The articulation of feudalism and capitalism by the colonial state. *The journal of peasant studies* 7, 2: 185–212.

Osella, F. and C. Osella. 1999. From transience to immanence: Consumption, life-cycle and social mobility in Kerala, south India. *Modern Asian studies* 33, 4, 989–1020.

———. 2000a. *Social mobility in Kerala: Modernity and identity in conflict*. London: Pluto.

———. 2000b. Migration, money and masculinity in Kerala. *The journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, 1: 115–31.

———. n.d. Once upon a time in the west? Narrating modernity in Kerala, south India.

Patel, T. 2001. Women and migration. *In* S. Visvanathan, ed., *Structure and transformation: Theory and society in India*, pp. 131–51. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Racine, J.-L. 1997. The roots of man. *In* J.-L. Racine, ed., *Peasant moorings: Village ties and mobility rationales in south India*, pp. 329–73. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Saberwal, S. 1976. *Mobile men: Limits to social change in urban Punjab*. New Delhi: Vikas.

Sharma, U. 1986. *Women's work, class and the urban household: A study of Shimla, north India*. London: Tavistock.

Sheth, N.R. 1968. *The social framework of an Indian factory*. Manchester. Manchester University Press.

Shukla, S. 2001. Locations for South Asian diasporas. *Annual review of anthropology* 30: 551–72.

Siddiqui, T. 2001. *Transcending boundaries: Labour migration of women from Bangladesh*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited.

Srinivas, M.N. 1995 [1966]. *Social change in modern India*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

Turner, B.S. 1990. Periodization and politics in the postmodern. *In* B.S. Turner, ed., *Theories of modernity and postmodernity*, pp. 1–13. London: Sage Publications.

Uchiyamada, Y. 2000. Industrial sewing machines, work-disciplines and aesthetics. *Critique of Anthropology* 20, 3: 243–64.

Vatuk, S. 1972. *Kinship and urbanization. White collar migrants in north India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Washbrook, D. 1988. Progress and problems: South Asian economic and social history c. 1720–1860. *Modern Asian studies* 22, 1: 57–96.

———. 1993. Land and labour in late eighteen-century south India: The golden age of Pariah? *In* P. Robb, ed., *Dalit movements and the meanings of labour in India*, pp. 68–86. Delhi: Oxford University Press

———. 1997. From comparative sociology to global history: Britain and India in the pre-history of modernity. *Journal of the social and economic history of the orient* 43, 4: 410–43.

Watson, J., ed. 1977. *Between two cultures: Migrants and minorities in Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Willis, K. and B. Yeoh, eds. 2000. *Gender and migration*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

A nation 'living in different places': Notes on the impossible work of purification in postcolonial Sri Lanka

Jonathan Spencer

The article explores the relationship between migration and the nation-state in Sri Lanka. In particular, it investigates the shifting political and moral responses to the movement of human populations in the colonial and postcolonial periods. From at least the mid-19th century, migration was seen as something requiring active 'management' by colonial officials; with the emergence of mass politics in the 1930s, new rhetorics of national purity are invoked. Theoretically, the article makes two points. The first is to treat all kinds of movement—internal and external—as potentially a single phenomenon. The other is to treat the disparity between the ideal of a bounded and static national population, and the inevitably messier reality of movement, as a necessary and inevitable feature of political modernity.

Jonathan Spencer is at the Graduate School of Social and Political Studies, University of Edinburgh, Adam Ferguson Building, George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LL, UK.

Acknowledgements: My original research in Sri Lanka in 1981–84 was supported by a Social Science Research Council (now ESRC) studentship. Earlier versions of this article were presented at the University of Sussex workshop on 'Migration and Modernity' and to an audience at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Oxford. I am grateful to colleagues on both occasions for helpful questions and criticisms, and especially to Filippo Osella for his patience, forbearance and intellectual stimulation. I am also grateful to Francis Watkins for more than a decade of fruitful conversation on the issues raised in this article

But do you know what a nation means? says John Wyse
Yes, says Bloom
What is it? says John Wyse.
A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people
living in the same place.
By God, then, says Ned, laughing, if that's so I'm a nation for
I'm living in the same place for the past five years.
So of course everyone had a laugh at Bloom and says he,
trying to muck out of it: Or also living in different places.

James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1971)

From time immemorial coolies are being imported into Ceylon from South India. There is no restriction in the matter of coolies going to Ceylon and there is no binding and no contract to be made.

1. *Ceylon—Lanka—is a land equally important to Hindus, Mohammedans and followers of Christianity. There are famous shrines and it is noted for its healthy climate.*
2. *The work is light. Handsome pay is given. Men get from 6 to 8 As, and women from 4 to 6 As, and boys who are able to work get As 3 to 6.*

Ceylon Labour Commission Notice, Trichinopoly, c.1916

(reproduced in Meyer 1998: 26–27)

I
Preamble

This article looks at problems of Sri Lanka as a nation 'living in different places'. This can be construed in two somewhat different ways. Internally, there have been very high rates of migration in postcolonial Sri Lanka, both formal and informal, voluntary and forced. Although the civil war has greatly exacerbated this situation, high rates of internal migration can be traced back at least as far as the 1930s. Externally, there have been major moves of population from south India as labourers from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century; from Sri Lanka to the Gulf and back from the late 1970s onward; and from the Tamil-speaking areas out of the country, first as professionals in exile, and since the 1980s as refugees.

The 'work of purification' is a metaphor taken from Latour's *We have never been modern* (1993), where it is used to describe the kind of cultural

work that goes into maintaining the fictive separation of nature and society, a separation and a fiction which Latour sees as central to the modern constitution. Here I will use it to describe the responses to the movement of people—from the state and its official organs, from its opponents like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE)—which attempt to contain this movement and thus maintain the illusion that 'the nation is the same people living in the same place'. In Sri Lanka such an illusion is, for geographical and political-economic reasons, especially impossible, and this may be one key to the apparent intractability of its problems. It may be the case, though, that this illusion is always impossible for all nation-states, but in examining the tension between the *appearance* of the modern nation-state, and the *actuality* revealed by close empirical scrutiny of actual people and their movements across internal and external borders, we may begin to shed a bit of light on the issue of modernity as an ethnographic problem. This, in part, is why I have invoked Latour in my title, for his argument is not that science does not 'work', nor that it is simply a construction, or a reflection of the social. Rather he is arguing that science works, not *because* it corresponds to its own self-representation as a set of practices and ideas abstracted from everyday social and cultural ties; but rather, that it works *despite* the fact that it cannot be abstracted in this way. In this branch of the sociology of science, fieldwork is especially important because it is this kind of empirical research which reveals the *systematic* discrepancy between the ideal of scientific practice, and the messier reality of its actual practice. My intuition is that similar empirical research, this time on the relationship between the ideal of the bounded unit of national population, and the messy reality of human movement, may reveal something similarly systemic about tne nation-state as a central fiction of political modernity.

This article has no pretensions to great empirical originality. My main claim to novelty is in bringing together a range of evidence, both historical and ethnographic, about the politics of human movement. Too often this evidence is divided up into separate topics—we study migrants *or* refugees, internal migration *or* transnational flows, population movements in the so-called era of globalisation *or* (much more rarely) colonial and pre-colonial movements. By drawing the different pieces into a single frame, I hope we can get a better grasp of the way in which migration has become constructed as a 'problem' (for governments and policy-makers as much as for anthropologists and social theorists). And, with that better grasp, it may be possible to think up new and more interesting questions for future research in this area.

II
Movement and morality

Let me start with an arresting ethnographic vignette. It is 1997, and I have returned to the village in which I conducted my original fieldwork in the 1980s in the company of an old friend—a well-known left-wing public intellectual from Colombo. A tragedy has just occurred in the village: a young woman has committed suicide by swallowing pesticide. Her boyfriend has been called to the hospital where she lies dying and he too swallows poison on the spot. The woman dies, the young man is still seriously ill in hospital. We are called to visit the house where the young woman's body is lying before the funeral. The house belongs to her mother's sister and her husband, and the suicide, it is said, was prompted by an argument between the young woman and her aunt over her relationship with the boyfriend—an unsuitable match in the aunt's opinion. The woman's mother is far away in the Middle East, working on her second contract there as a housemaid.

As we leave the house, my Colombo friend gets into an argument with people from the village. To them there is a straightforward moral frame for this story. Women go away to work in the Gulf, leaving their children to be cared for by others. Things go wrong, the mother is not there, and tragedy ensues. In the end, the mother is to blame, and migration is the source of moral disorder. My Colombo friend disagrees, partly for the sake of it I suspect, and puts a case for migration, and especially female migration, as a positive good—a source of autonomy and freedom for the women who travel. But the villagers' evaluation is echoed in other studies. To take an example from a West Coast village, some husbands left behind to live on their wives' remittances from the Gulf take to alcohol, and the trouble that comes with alcohol. In these cases, documented by Michelle Gamburd in a recent monograph (Gamburd 2000), it is the absent wives who are blamed for the drinking in the first place. If they hadn't left to find remunerative work outside the country, none of this would ever have happened.

The rest of Gamburd's work draws out a more complex moral picture than this example alone might suggest but, as in my vignette, we have a stark, and rather melodramatic, example of the construction of migration as 'a problem'. The kinds of issues raised in my example, though, connect with a great deal of other relatively recent ethnography of Sri Lanka. If you read beyond the Freudian surface of Obeyesekere's *Medusa's hair* (1981), for example, you will find that there is an unacknowledged theme

to do with movement, separation and loss that runs through his case studies of individual trauma: the central image in this theme is the daughter or niece who lives away from her family and, because she hears too late, fails to return for the funeral farewell when a loved one dies. The movements in *Medusa's hair* are internal to the country, from village to village, village to town, town to village. To a visitor in the 1980s, Sri Lanka seemed to be permanently on the move. Studies carried out on the basis of census data in the 1980s bear this impression out: Kearney and Miller (1985), for example, were able to document extremely high levels of rural to rural migration within Sri Lanka, with (interestingly enough) the highest levels correlating with the highest rises in suicide among young people.

But if we shift from the space of ethnography to the place of policy, we find a similar moral unease with the issue of population movement. In the literature on Gulf migration from South Asia, there is a persistent admonitory undercurrent as writers lament the frittering of Gulf remittances on consumption rather than production, houses and white goods rather than (presumably) fertiliser and seed. In an excellent recent DfID working paper, Arjan de Haan (2000) documents a widespread antipathy to migration from policy-makers and planners in Asia and Africa. This ranges from straightforward attempts to block movement (especially from rural to urban areas), to failures to treat migration as a possible source of social benefits, something on which to build new programmes and initiatives. Perhaps the most bathetic of his examples comes from a World Bank economist who, after carpet-bombing the reader with algorithms, reaches the breathtaking conclusion that, viewed through the lens of social capital, the best policy option is for the rich states of the North to tax and regulate immigration and for the paupers of the South to relax trade restrictions in turn (Schiff 1999).

These are all examples of the construction of migration as 'a problem'. In what follows I want to trace a genealogy for that construction and, like my Colombo friend, try to provoke some other ways of thinking about the topic.

III
Movement and modernity

Perhaps there is something about modernity as a topic which encourages an over-schematic approach to history. Much globalisation theory, for example, seems to rest on the dubious assumption that people only started

to move around in the era of the long-haul flight, and before that the human norm was to stay put. Other accounts of the transition to modernity imply something rather different: the political closure of an earlier world of free movement. Here I want to tease out two different issues. The first is the political aspiration on the part of colonial states to control—where necessary prevent, but generally *manage*—the movement of populations. This can be plausibly presented, as I shall argue in a moment, as a distinctive break with pre-colonial modes of power in the region. My second issue overlaps with this one, but also tugs states and policy-makers in a rather different direction. This is the vision of the bounded, internally homogeneous, nation-state as the natural unit of the global political order. The issues overlap historically, but have rather different genealogies. The management of movement can be traced as far back as the mid-19th century.[1] In Sri Lanka, the distinctive issues of national purity emerge with the coming of mass politics in the late 1920s and early 1930s. But, as a backdrop to both these issues, there is always the increasing pressure of global capital to pull would-be workers from place to place.

Let me start with the management of movement. In the early 1980s, the historian Michael Adas published a provocative piece on peasant history under the title 'From protest to avoidance' (Adas 1981 [1992a]). Using a wide range of secondary sources—predominantly from Southeast and South Asia, but with occasional glances at material from Africa and elsewhere—Adas drew a strong contrast between the political structures of pre-colonial and colonial states. Pre-colonial states tended to concentrate power in the centre; colonial states aspired to a more homogeneous diffusion of power and administration. In pre-colonial states, peasants who felt in any way oppressed usually used various tactics glossed by Adas as 'avoidance'; in colonial states, the spread of state power narrowed the possibilities for avoidance, and often triggered more overt—and necessarily bloody and futile—rebellion. Among the types of protest Adas glosses together as 'avoidance', the capacity to go elsewhere is especially important. Peasants could protest by disengaging from their immediate political superiors and attaching themselves to an alternative lord. Or, *in extremis*, they could simply walk away from an unwelcome situation: 'Cruel and incompetent rulers were abandoned by their subjects

[1] The imaginative ubiquity of the ideal-typical nation-state is a far more recent phenomenon. In a recent article John Kelly and Martha Kaplan argue that it should really be dated to the wave of post-WWII decolonisation, its reproduction a by-product of US global dominance. In a response, I have indicated some problems with their argument (Kelly and Kaplan 2001a; cf. Kelly and Kaplan 2001b; Spencer 2001).

and millenarian prophecies spoke of eras of chaos and confusion in which hordes of villagers wandered aimlessly on the roads' (Adas 1992a [1981]: 105). By contrast, after the consolidation of European power, flight was only an option in the most remote and inhospitable frontier regions (ibid.: 114).

Adas's argument is, of course, schematic and overdraws the contrast between the colonial and the pre-colonial (as he acknowledges in a post-script to the republished version of his paper [Adas 1992b]). In particular, his proto-Foucaultian argument about the colonial control of space shares the flaw of many subsequent Foucaultian accounts of colonial power/knowledge—specifically it is based on a somewhat naïve confusion of colonial *aspirations* to homogeneous administrative control with the more mundane actuality in which both colonial power and colonial knowledge were dependent on myriad, more or less reliable, local intermediaries (cf. Bayly 1996). Part of my argument here is that the history of human movement, while experiencing significant changes of scale, is nevertheless a *continuous* history, without huge sudden breaks of the kind signified by the tradition/modernity divide. What changes over time, though, is not so much the fact of human movement, as the kinds of political issues raised (and often unresolved) as a consequence of that movement.

Here, I believe, we can start to explore a central contradiction between the political and the economic modes of the modern. The economic needs of an increasingly globalised capitalism require the movement of workers from one place to another, over both short and long distances. In South Asia those movements developed and grew in the course of the 19th century, on the grandest scale in the process documented by Huge Tinker in his seminal study, *A new system of slavery* (1974). From the 1830s on, labourers moved from India to Ceylon, Mauritius, Burma, Malaya, Fiji, South Africa and the Caribbean. In the first phase they moved as indentured labourers; after the First World War those who came to British Ceylon were increasingly recruited under something known as the *kangani* system. But colonial power also oversaw considerable internal movement, for example to supply a workforce for the new canal lands of the Punjab. All of this required management, measurement and regulation. With the coming of mass politics, though, the aspiration to manage the movement of people became infused with a concern to maintain the supposed purity of national populations. In the next section I want to trace through the workings of these various concerns in the Ceylon of the later 19th and early 20th centuries.

IV
Before independence: Sons of the soil

Readers of the literature on agrarian change in Sri Lanka will be familiar with two crucial ecological oppositions. One is between the populous Wet Zone, in the south-west corner of the island, and the less densely populated Dry Zone in the north, east and south-east. The other is between wet-rice cultivation and swidden or shifting cultivation (often referred to as *chena* after the Sinhala *hen*). The two modes of cultivation correspond broadly to modes of sociality: rice is the zone of property, fixity, and hierarchical ties to landlords and political authorities; *chena* is loose, collective, unhierarchical, and often escapes effective political control (cf. Brow 1978: 92–100; Leach 1961: 289–95; Meyer 1983; Spencer 2000: 104–14). Rice was, in many respects, a medium of political centralisation, whereas *chena* was conducted on the periphery (a pattern found across Southeast Asia): 'was conducted', because *chena* as such has all but died out under the pressure of an expanding population in the last twenty or thirty years, and its place has been taken by various sorts of dry-land cash-cropping.

In the 19th century, though, shifting cultivation became constructed as a central 'problem' for administrators:

> The people would rather die among old surroundings than migrate in either direction. These Kandyan villages or rather parishes consisting of a few scattered houses among many square miles of sun-dried hills, belong to a primitive order of things which cannot be maintained on any modern principles of rural economy, in other words life in them cannot go on for long without *chena* cultivation, and *chena* cultivation in the long run makes poverty permanent.[2]

These are the words of a colonial Government Agent, reflecting on the failure of a scheme to relocate families on a newly restored area of paddy-land on the (hot and malarial) plateau below the 'parishes' in question. The following year, his successor returned to the area and echoed the lament:

[2] Government Agent's Diaries, Ratnapura Kachcheri papers, Sri Lankan National Archives 45/333, 15 February 1911.

> There appears to be a very high rate of mortality [on the new paddy-lands]. The soil is wonderfully rich, judging by the growth of all the fruit trees. But the climate has a very bad name. Before the irrigation scheme can have a fair chance, medical aid in the shape of a dispensary is required. The people in all the neighbouring villages are confirmed *chena* clearers and this scheme was meant to convert them to paddy and prevent them roaming.[3]

As these two passages make clear, there is a double perspective on movement at work here. The colonial government was not against movement as such, but it had to be movement *on its own terms*—i.e., movement to permanent homes based on 'modern principles of rural economy'. The whole point of 'official migration' was, paradoxically, to 'prevent them roaming'. 'Roaming' meant working *chena*, and working *chena* was a source of moral as well as material failing.

Of course, these attempts to control, regulate and restrict *chena*, and thus create new, stable, rice-growing, modern subjects, had their counterparts across the colonial world (cf. Moore and Vaughan 1994), but they were far from successful. Instead they often created new fields of power for local elites which attempted to exploit the gap between colonial aspirations to homogeneous regulation and the inevitable lacunae in colonial knowledge of life on the margins of the settled villages (Meyer 1983; Spencer 2000: 108–9). Official ambivalence about movement was expressed in other contexts too. In the area where I worked, immigrants from the—economically and educationally more 'advanced'—areas near Colombo, were portrayed in official accounts as potential sources of corruption and degradation. And an extensive and complex official discourse built up around the Indian workers who migrated into the plantation areas from the 1840s onwards.

Colonial constructions of movement as a problem were central to the politics which emerged after the granting of limited self-government based on universal suffrage in 1931. The principal 'negative' construction concerned immigrant workers from India. Although contemporary accounts of ethnic division in Sri Lanka often concentrate on the fate of the Tamil-speaking tea estate workers in the central mountains of the island, the story of colonial immigration is more complex than that. Indentured labourers from south India were recruited to the emerging estate sector from the 1840s onward. At first, the migrants were overwhelmingly

[3] Ibid., 27 April 1912.

male and recruitment was seasonally focused on the coffee harvest. From the 1870s, as coffee gave way to tea, the proportion of women and children grew, and a settled year-round labour force was gradually established. These workers were predominantly recruited from the Tamil-speaking south Indian districts of Trichy, Tanjore and Madurai (Bandarage 1983: 174–221). During the rubber boom before the First World War, these 'traditional' sources of labour proved insufficient and workers for new rubber estates were brought in from west Indian districts on the border between present-day Maharashtra and Karnataka (Meyer 1998). Finally, between 1900 and 1930, a substantial group of Malayali-speakers came to Colombo, where they worked in the docks and factories, as well as in domestic service for Europeans (Jayawardena 1985).

These relatively recent immigrants took their place in a complex racial geography, in which different groups contested their place in the colonial order in terms of competing accounts of past movement between the island and the neighbouring subcontinent. So the Sinhalese claimed to be descendants of immigrants from north-east India who had come to the island at the time of Buddha. They were, then, immigrants but, in their view, they were the *first* immigrants (apart from the supposedly aboriginal and supposedly primitive Veddas)—a view long contested by Tamil politicians. When a prominent Tamil leader in the late 19th century claimed that the substantial Muslim minority on the island was 'really' made up of south Indian Tamils who had converted to Islam, Muslims countered by asserting descent from itinerant Arab traders who had married locally (Samaraweera 1977). And, around the same time, leaders of the upwardly mobile Sinhalese Karava caste repeatedly stressed the caste's origins in *ksatriya* immigration from—depending on the version—either north or south India (Roberts 1982: 18–32).

As colonial ethnology blended into emergent nationalism, this racial geography became increasingly infused with the rhetoric of purification. After anti-Muslim violence in 1915, the Sinhala Buddhist activist Anagarika Dharmapala sent a long letter to the Colonial Secretary in London, a letter which contained the following passage:

> The Muhammedans, an alien people, who in the early part of the 19th century were common traders, by Shylockian methods became prosperous like the Jews. The Sinhalese, sons of the soil, whose ancestors for 2,358 years had shed rivers of blood to keep the country free from alien invaders, who had constructed vast tanks to irrigate millions of acres: Today they are in the eyes of the British only vagabonds. The

> alien South Indian Muhammedan comes to Ceylon, sees the neglected illiterate villager, without any experience in trade, without any knowledge of any kind of technical industry and isolated from the whole of Asia on account of his language, religion and race, and the result is the Muhammedan thrives and the son of the soil goes to the wall (Dharmapala 1965 [1915]: 540).

In the 1930s, the Sinhala union leader A.E. Goonesinha, led a campaign against the Malayali workers in Colombo. An editorial in the union newspaper *Viraya* set the tone:

> On many occasions we have heard how one Malayali creeps into a factory . . . then proceeds to threaten the livelihood of the other workers by using all types of tactics to fill that factory with his countrymen (*Viraya* editorial, 31 March 1936, in Jayawardena 1985: 50).

In the same issue, Goonesinha himself warned of the dangers of Sinhala women 'falling prey to the wiles of the Malayali', and a letter from the same source a month later referred approvingly to Hitler's prohibition of mixed marriages, and called for similar control on unions between Sinhala women and Malayalis: 'If this practice, which is certain to lead the nation to slavery and servitude, is prohibited, it will be a timely step for the cause of the Sinhala race' (*Viraya*, 17 April 1936, in Jayawardena 1985: 55). And the Ceylon Banking Commission, in its 1934 annual report, likened Indian Chettiar bankers to Jews, who needed to be 'exterminated' or 'exorcised' if 'our' island was to achieve financial equilibrium (Meyer 1980: 224).

The 'purist' rhetoric which was so characteristic of the first decade of mass politics in the 1930s had a number of practical consequences. Throughout the decade, elite politicians had worked to exclude, as far as possible, Indian Tamils from the franchise. There was constant pressure for the government to introduce new controls on immigration from India. In 1936 a commission was established to look into the issue, but its report two years later disappointed those who had been agitating for a complete ban (Wickramasinghe 2001: 198–99). In 1939, proposals to repatriate Indian workers from Ceylon provoked the Indian government to institute a retaliatory ban on any further migration *to* Ceylon. Restrictions on Indian Tamil voting rights were tightened in the early 1940s and in 1948, immediately after independence, citizenship was withdrawn from all but a handful of the Indian Tamil population. The disenfranchised did

not go away, though, but continued to work, especially in the plantation sector. In 1964, an agreement was reached between the governments of India and Ceylon which prescribed repatriation to India for the majority of the almost one million stateless Tamils, but allowed a significant proportion to remain and apply for Ceylonese citizenship.

The 1930s work of purification was not, though, an entirely negative activity. The propagation of stereotypes, the warnings against mixed unions—all served as a ground against which a new, positive figure could emerge. This 'positive' construction concerned the management of movement into new land. Increasingly, the 'true' sons of the soil were presented as rural rather than urban, Kandyan (and thus 'traditional') rather than Low-Country, farmers not traders, and above all Sinhala rather than Tamil or Muslim. In the political imaginary of the time, these embodiments of national purity were, though, embattled: hemmed in on their traditional lands by the spread of 'alien' plantations, politically 'swamped' by the votes of immigrant labourers, 'neglected' by successive colonial governments. The key to their regeneration was land, especially land in the under-populated Dry Zone of the country. 'Pioneers' and 'colonists' were given access to unoccupied Crown Lands, and state resources were diverted into the restoration and construction of irrigation works in the Dry Zone. The policy, which was based on an explicit and widely espoused goal to 'preserve' the (Sinhala) peasantry, was central to government agrarian policy from the mid-1930s through to the start of the civil war in the early 1980s. By that time, the demographic shape of the target areas had changed enormously, as new Sinhala immigrants moved into under-populated districts abutting the main areas of Tamil and Muslim settlement in the north and east (Manogaram 1987: 78–114; Moore 1985: 44–49; Peebles 1990). Alongside this, though, was an even bigger wave of unofficial migrants, mostly squatters on encroached state land.

So the themes of management and purification coincide and intertwine in the decades before and after independence. Barriers are created to prevent further movement into the island from India, and those whose families had come from India become the targets of public vilification. After independence most had their citizenship rights stripped away. Within the island there is a great deal of movement, much of it officially sponsored and intended to 'protect' or 'preserve' the indigenous peasantry, the 'sons of the soil', whose natural virtues are the other side of the coin of purification. Policy is oriented to a world of clear boundaries and exemplary essences. But all the while the impurities linger and multiply. The Indian Tamils lose their rights, but stay more or less where they

were, picking tea for a pittance. The Dry Zone gradually fills with squatters, often making a living on the very fringe of legality, rather than the imagined yeomen of the official colonisation schemes.

There are three general points to be made here. The first concerns the contradiction between the political and the economic. This is most obviously apparent in the arguments about aliens and immigrants. The commercial transformation of the island's economy in the second half of the 19th century was in large part dependent on access to a steady supply of cheap labour from India. The presence of large numbers of south Indian labourers provided an easy target for politicians in the 1930s. Economically, people had to move—'From time immemorial coolies are being imported into Ceylon from South India'; politically, in the emerging world of new nation-states, people were supposed to stay pure—'the same people living in the same place'. But—and this is my second point about the gap between aspiration and actuality—government restrictions on citizenship did not actually remove the alien presence. In fact, Indian Tamils increased as a proportion of the population between the censuses of 1946 and 1953, and only began to significantly decrease as the effects of the 1964 agreement began to show in the census returns of 1971 and 1981. Finally, there is in all this a strong element of continuity. The government's efforts at the management of movement, exemplified by the Dry Zone colonisation schemes, drew in large part on colonial assumptions about the moral virtues of wet-rice agriculture, and the need to induce people to move to new areas of rice land, where they would embrace 'modern principles of rural economy'—*for their own good.*

V
After independence: The politics of internal movement

But, along with the official encouragement of movement to the Dry Zone colonisation schemes, there has been at least as much unofficial migration into under-populated rural areas. The key factor here is access to enough land for at least a house plot, and if possible either *chena* or fixed dry-land cultivation. In the vast majority of cases, the land in question officially belongs to the state, but much of it has been made available, either explicitly through Village Expansion Schemes, or simply by officially tolerated encroachment (Moore 1985: 42–44).[4] The village where

[4] So, in the more remote Dry Zone areas in the 1971 census, the proportion born outside the district varied from 27 per cent in Moneragala to 36 per cent in Vavuniya and 48 per cent in Polonnaruva.

I encountered the double suicide was in large part a product of this sort of internal migration. In 1982 when I first worked there, 48 per cent of the population had moved into the village in the previous ten years. In my own survey, 81 per cent were classed as 'settlers'—members of households which had arrived in the area since the 1940s (Spencer 2000: 43). Some of these migrants had moved relatively short distances, from villages 10 or 15 miles further towards the Wet Zone; others, like the poorest and most recent arrivals, had come further—from the crowded suburbs of Colombo, often by way of other stops and attempted settlements in different parts of the Dry Zone. They include the families of the young suicides—an important point because of the study I have already cited, which showed a strong correlation between high levels of inter-district migration and rising rates of suicide among the young (Kearney and Miller 1985). In other words, the mother's absence in the Middle East may or may not have been a contributing factor in the young woman's death, but the bigger picture suggests that her suicide is the sort of thing that happens most frequently in places like this—places where half or more of the population are recent immigrants, usually extremely poor, and on the margins of state surveillance and control.

Here we come full circle, because these are, in Adas's terms, classic spaces of 'avoidance'—places on the edge of things, where much that goes on is less than fully legal—growing ganja, searching for gemstones without a licence, hunting. Some of these areas were the home of social bandits like Pode Wije, who haunted the Polonnaruva-Habarana road in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Since then, they have also been successful recruiting grounds for the militant organisations on both sides—the JVP among the Sinhala population, the LTTE among Tamils. Those closest to the front line of the war—again Polonnaruva, Amparai, Vavuniya—have been the site of some of the most terrifying violence.

A word of caution is needed here. There is clearly a pattern to be discerned in which migration, sometimes political violence, and sometimes suicide are distributed in overlapping ways. But the aetiology is complex. People who migrate into the poorest areas are usually among the poorest when they start. Is it poverty or migration—or something else altogether—which induces high levels of suicide? For some, it has been convenient to attribute the high level of suicide and the high level of political violence to the breakdown of 'traditional' networks of kin support, but it may be equally plausible to present suicide and political militancy as alternative modes of escape from the oppressive structures of

kinship (Uyangoda 1997). The figures presented by Kearney and Miller are highly suggestive, but—another index of the limits of state power—there has been no full census since 1981 to help us refine the correlations. Turning correlations into causes requires us to leave the numbers behind and engage with real cases, real people—also impossible in many of these areas because of the war.

It is against this background that we need to assess the evidence on transnational migration. Since the late 1970s there have been two major movements: one of workers to the Gulf on temporary contracts, the other of refugees to India and beyond. Both phenomena have been studied and reported on, though in oddly asymmetrical ways. Studies of Gulf migration have focused on its effects on 'home' communities in Sri Lanka, with little first-hand evidence of life in the Gulf itself (Eelens, Schampers and Speckman 1992; Gamburd 2000). Studies of refugees have focused on diaspora communities in the West, with only limited reference to conditions in the war zone back in Sri Lanka (Fuglerud 1999; McDowell 1996). In the terms favoured by the UK Home Office, these are self-evidently different phenomena—economic migrants versus *bona fide* refugees—but, as anyone who has worked in this field knows, in practice the distinction is far from clear. Both Gulf migrants and asylum-seekers leave the country; both groups usually rely on payments to middle-men who provide tickets and (often dubious) documentation; both hope to arrive at destinations where wages are higher, but the migrant has few, if any, rights of citizenship.

Space here does not allow it, but there is obviously a case for treating the two phenomena as different points along the same broad spectrum of possibility for migrants. There is also a case for re-embedding the discussion of transnational population flows within the picture of more local flows of migration: many Sri Lankan migrants to the Gulf are women who work as housemaids, but their situation is clearly comparable to that of women who leave home to work in Free Trade Zone garment factories within the country. Refugees and Gulf workers have to deal with the problems and traumas of long-distance kinship, but so too do squatters trying to establish themselves on a few acres of government land in the Dry Zone. Policy fashions sweep across this highly mobile landscape and pick out and highlight 'problems'—mothers away in the Gulf, displaced women and children on the fringe of the war zone—but this selective attention distorts our understanding of the broader field of human movement.

VI
More on purification

When I first evisaged this article, my idea was simply to start from the perspective of movement and migration and catalogue the points at which such a perspective sheds light on the ongoing war in Sri Lanka. In fact I have only skimmed the surface of the most easily available material and much has been left unexplored.

The north, for example. My account of late colonial perspectives on movement has made no mention of the curious centrifugal economy which developed in and around Jaffna in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Jaffna got education and it got it comparatively early. American missionaries set up excellent English-medium schools, and the products of that education—too many to be absorbed into the limited economy of the Jaffna peninsula—went forth into the world as clerks, lawyers, judges, doctors, engineers. Their families back home waited for the postal orders which kept them going and which served for many years as a symbol of the peculiar local political economy. By the time of independence, Jaffna Tamils were entrenched in the professions and government employment, not just in other areas of Sri Lanka, but also in India and Malaya and further afield. When a populist government came to power in 1956, with a mandate to open up employment for 'our' people—the rural, Sinhala-educated majority—their target was the privileged position of the urban elite. But their chief weapon—a language policy of 'Sinhala only' in access to state employment—hit hardest in areas like Jaffna. When another populist government returned to the problem of rural unemployment in the wake of the 1971 Insurrection, their target was again urban privilege in general, but their strategy—a set of district-based quotas for access to university education—again was felt hardest in areas like Jaffna. After 1956, those who could—generally professionals with the greatest economic potential—started to send their postal orders from further afield, from Britain, Canada and Australia. Those cut off by the educational reforms of the mid-1970s lacked that possibility, and the generation which felt itself unfairly excluded from the 'traditional' educational escape route provided the first cohort of recruits for the new militant separatist organisations that emerged at this point.

Here we have a somewhat more complex working through of the politics of movement. The Jaffna peninsula has long exported its educated young men, but the language reforms of the 1950s pushed those best qualified further, while limiting the possibilities for those less qualified.

The university policy of the 1970s again limited the possibilities for educational mobility, and was one of a host of factors that pushed young men and women towards direct, violent opposition to the state. But, although neither of these shifts in government policy were directed explicitly towards migration and movement, in practice their effects were felt in spatial terms.

At this point, it is worth returning to one of the defining moments in the developing conflict. In the early 1980s, a radical Tamil NGO called the Gandhiyam movement started to work in the dry hinterland of Trincomalee, helping former Estate Tamils from the Hill Country settle—like thousands of squatters elsewhere in the island—in an inhospitable and under-populated part of the Dry Zone. But, where other migrants had been left alone by the authorities, or in some cases even actively encouraged, the Gandhiyam settlement became the focus of an officially-encouraged moral panic in the Sinhala press. They were, it was alleged, a terrorist front whose aim, again it was alleged, was either to recruit Estate Tamils into the militant groups, or simply to settle them as a buffer population to protect the richer Jaffna Tamils from their Sinhala neighbours in the south. Their presence, it was whispered, was blocking the progress of the government's flagship development project, the accelerated Mahaveli colonisation scheme. Shortly before the riots of July 1983, Gandhiyam's leaders were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and despatched to Welikade prison in Colombo (where they died in the massacre of Tamil prisoners that took place in July). Former Estate Tamils found in the area during the July violence were rounded up and trucked back to the Hill Country from whence they were supposed to have come.

Whatever the reality of the Gandhiyam Movement's motives and actions, the government had made it clear that, for them, there were limits to informal movement across the island's emptier spaces. The prospect of a substantial presence of Indian Tamils in the heartland of the new Mahaveli society was too much, and required a gesture of official purification. Ironically, in the long run it has been precisely these spaces—the backwoods, jungly territory away from the centres of population and the main roads—that have proved most resistant to state control as the war has rolled on. The long, violent stalemate in these areas conclusively demonstrates the limits of the postcolonial state's aspiration to even, homogeneous power within all its claimed territory, but it also demonstrates, even more clearly, the apparent lack of limits on the aspiration itself. This is the area where you will now find the LTTE most firmly

installed. The LTTE appears to thrive in the interstices of official power, in the zones of avoidance, the places that have always been on the edge of things (cf. Montani 1999). Its activities suggest further twists in my tale of spatial/purificatory politics: is it, for example, entirely a coincidence that the core LTTE leadership grew up in a village (Velvettiturai) long famous for its smuggling links to the Indian mainland? What should we make of the reports from around 1990 when the LTTE was said to be demanding a heavy exit tax from the Jaffna bourgeoisie as it sought to flee the semi-desolate ruins of Tamil Ealam? What too of its alleged role as controller of cross-border movements of arms, people and other contraband, both across Asia and beyond?

Meanwhile, the work of purification continues. Recent devolution proposals have envisaged a more or less federal structure, in which power is devolved to a series of ethnically or culturally homogeneous units. But the population is not distributed in such simple patterns. The checkerboard pattern of Tamil and Muslim settlements on the east coast has been a persistent sticking point in peace negotiations: the LTTE demand the east joins the north in a single Tamil unit of government; in the past Muslim representatives have refused to accept a political division which would make them a permanent minority. Persistent violence from all sides has forced people to move, from one hamlet to another, from villages to small towns, sometimes to camps, sometimes out of the area altogether. One ethnographer has recently claimed that 80 per cent of the population in Batticaloa district had been 'displaced' by 1990 (Lawrence 1999: 198), but it is hard to see how firm data could be gathered in the insecure and dangerous conditions that have held since the mid-1980s (cf. Montani 1999; Lawrence 2000; McGilvray 1999; Whitaker 1999). In the east, attempts at purification have led to huge suffering and a great deal of movement and displacement, but there is no evidence that the area is any more ethnically or religiously homogeneous than it was when the conflict started to bite twenty years ago. In the north, by contrast, purification has been simpler; in 1990 the LTTE ordered the entire Muslim population of Jaffna to leave the area. They moved south *en masse*, as did Muslims from the Mannar peninsula in the north-west.[5]

[5] At the time of final revisions to this article (May 2002), Sri Lanka is experiencing a brief but welcome outbreak of peace. In the tense negotiations around the current cease-fire, a central issue has been the management of movement around the country. For the Colombo government, 'free access' to all the island, for the whole population, is a *sine qua non* for any settled peace; the LTTE, though, is clearly concerned to maintain some kind of control over the movement of people and goods in and out of the north and east.

VII
Concluding remarks

Let me return to the schematic history of the modern. I started with a discussion of Adas's argument about the politics of movement in pre-colonial and colonial Asia for two reasons. First of all, his evidence on pre-colonial strategies of avoidance offers a useful counterpoint to the simplifications of globalisation theory, making it clear that movement is not in itself evidence of 'modernity' (let alone 'postmodernity'). In Adas's argument, colonial attempts to impose homogeneous territorial control tended to limit the possibilities for avoidance, and thus helped provoke more overt, violent, but usually futile, forms of resistance. At this point I introduced a key qualification: it is not so much that colonial power achieved such a level of homogeneous control—there is plenty of reason to think that it didn't—rather it is the *aspiration* to such control that mattered. The quintessential form of political modernity that emerged from the era of European colonialism is the nation-state, a political form based, in Bloom's words, on the ideal of the 'same people living in the same place'. Pre-modern political structures more easily accommodated the inevitability of human movement and, in an argument like Adas's, migration could be seen to act as a necessary safety valve mechanism to limit the dysfunctional excesses of over-ambitious rulers. Political modernity, in contrast, is an era of passports, visas, border controls, and not infrequently, political use of a public rhetoric of national purity and purification, all based on what Malkki (1992) calls the 'school atlas' vision of a world of clear lines and discrete entities. In this world, movement can never be simply taken for granted: it constitutes a 'problem' which requires a particular kind of control and regulation, or at least some appearance of control and regulation.

Of course, the use of a rhetoric of purity has been often employed to force people out of a particular territory, to the extent that Adas's millenarian vision of 'hordes of villagers' wandering aimlessly on the roads has become a central and inescapable image in our late modern mediascapes. The contradiction between the political aspiration to national purity, and the movements of population that often flow from it is, as it were, internal to the political domain. Possibly even more significant is the contradiction between the powerful pulls and pushes of global capital, which requires the movement of both people and goods across space, and especially across borders, and the presumption of stasis as a kind of

political norm within the frame of the nation-state. Those who transgress that norm present a moral challenge to the powers-that-be.

Here I want to return to the source for my title, Bruno Latour's *We have never been modern.* What I find attractive about Latour's take on the modern is that it provides a very suggestive frame for interpreting the disparity between the powerful self-images of modernity—self-images which are usually based on self-evident and clearly bounded antinomies (tradition/modernity, nature/culture, science/society)—and the far messier picture revealed by careful ethnographic and historical research in which the boundaries are routinely transgressed and hybrids abound. It is relatively easy to show that, for example, western people are not agents of an asocial rational market calculus, that scientists do not, after all, shed their social ties and their cultural assumptions when they walk through the door of the laboratory. One part of Latour's argument is that it was ever thus—we really never have been modern in the way social theorists have construed modernity. The other part, which is most relevant here, is that the gap between ideal and actuality is central to the modern constitution, and what Latour calls the work of purification is part of the internal dynamic of our world.

If we transfer this argument to political modernity, then the different phenomena I have considered begin to fall into place. Let me start with the idea of a nation as a bunch of people 'living in the same place'. Recently, increased transnational population flows, the growth of long-distance diasporic nationalisms, all the phenomena glibly described under the heading of globalisation, have combined to lead writers like Appadurai (1993) to talk of an emergent 'post-national' order. I think this is too facile a conclusion, not least because it implicitly assumes that there once was a time when people really did 'live in one place'. Instead, I would argue that people *never* have 'lived in one place', and what gives nationalism its force is precisely this kind of lack, the impossibility of the world and its people ever fitting into the neat socio-geographic divides of the nationalist imaginary. It may be that in a place like Sri Lanka—a small island that has long served as a point of transit on the Indian Ocean trade routes, with a history of high levels of internal movement—this lack is felt to be more pressing and more profound, and this may be one of the background factors feeding the conflict there. But the dissonance between a political metaphysic of stasis (to use Malkki's terminology again) and a world of constant movement is a far more general phenomenon than that.

301
C768

Here we can make a productive comparison with the situation in the north-east of the South Asian subcontinent. Ranabir Samaddar's *The marginal nation* (Samaddar 1999), uses field data collected along the Bangladesh/West Bengal border as the basis for a much wider discussion of nations and borders in South Asia. He reminds us in passing of the close links in the region between violence and movement. In this respect the central event which still haunts the 20th century political history of the region is a moment of terrifying purification: the partition of 1947–48 in which fifteen million people were displaced and a further million died. But Samaddar further reminds us of the way in which movement which apparently violates the official order, also, as it were, creates the opportunity for a better and clearer display of that order. Movement provides the ground for a certain statecraft, which in turn creates the naturalisation of what otherwise would appear as fragile and contingent—that is, the spatially settled co-existence of state, society and nation. The world of borders, visas, passports is one place where the agents of modern states *perform* their enactments of a world of regulation, control and bureaucratically enforced purity. Official control over movement is never complete, and frequently quite ineffective, yet it remains a privileged site for the state, through its agents, to display a certain vision of political order. Without the transgressive movement of people across borders, there would be less occasion for display. It is here, in the space of statecraft and its antithesis, where the state at once exercises and denies its own violence, and where ethnographic scepticism corrodes the complacent self-images of modernity, that we might expect the really interesting anthropological questions to emerge.

REFERENCES

ADAS, M. 1981. From avoidance to confrontation: Peasant protest in pre-colonial and colonial Southeast Asia. *Comparative studies in society and history* 23, 2: 217–47.

———. 1992a. From avoidance to confrontation: Peasant protest in pre-colonial and colonial Southeast Asia (revised version). *In* N. Dirks, ed., *Colonialism and culture*, pp. 89–126. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

———. 1992b. Comment. *In* N. Dirks, ed., *Colonialism and culture*, pp. 127–34. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

APPADURAI, A. 1993. Patriotism and its futures. *Public culture* 5, 3: 411–29.

BANDARAGE, A. 1983. *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The political economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833–1886*. Berlin, New York: Mouton.

KP 2247

BAYLY, C. 1996. *Empire and information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780–1870.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BROW, J. 1978. *Vedda villages of Anuradhapura.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

DE HAAN, A. 2000. Migrants, livelihoods, and rights: The relevance of migration in development policies. *Social Development Working Paper 4.* London: Department for International Development.

DHARMAPALA, A. 1965 [1915]. Letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 June 1915. *In* A. Guruge, ed., *Return to righteousness: A collection of speeches, essays and letters of the Anagarika Dharmapala,* pp. 537–42. Colombo: Government Press.

EELENS, F., T. SCHAMPERS and J. SPECKMAN. 1992. *Labour migration to the Middle East: From Sri Lanka to the Gulf.* London: Kegan Paul International.

FUGLERUD, O. 1999. *Life on the outside: The Tamil diaspora and long-distance nationalism.* London: Pluto.

GAMBURD, M. 2000. *The kitchen spoon's handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's migrant housemaids.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

JAYAWARDENA, K. 1985. *Ethnicity and class conflicts in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Sanjiva Books.

JOYCE, J. 1971. *Ulysses.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

KEARNEY, R. and B. MILLER. 1985. The spiral of suicide and social change in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Asian studies* 44, 1: 81–101.

KELLY, J. and M. KAPLAN. 2001a. Nation and decolonization: Toward a new anthropology of nationalism. *Anthropological theory* 1, 4: 419–37.

———. 2001b. *Represented communities: Fiji and world decolonization.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

LATOUR, B. 1993. *We have never been modern.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

LAWRENCE, P. 1999. The changing *amman*: Notes on the injury of war in Eastern Sri Lanka. *In* S. Gamage and I. Watson, eds., *Conflict and community in contemporary Sri Lanka,* pp. 197–215. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

———. 2000. Violence, suffering, *amman*: The work of oracles in Sri Lanka's Eastern war zone. *In* Veena Das et al., eds., *Violence and subjectivity,* pp. 171–204. Berkeley: University of California Press.

LEACH, E. 1961. *Pul Eliya: A village in Ceylon.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MALKKI, L. 1992. National geographic: The rooting of peoples and the territorialization of national identity among scholars and refugees. *Cultural anthropology* 7, 1: 24–44.

MANOGARAM, C. 1987. *Ethnic conflict and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

McDOWELL, C. 1996. *A Tamil asylum diaspora: Sri Lankan migration, settlement and politics in Switzerland.* Oxford: Berghahn Books.

McGILVRAY, D. 1999. Tamils and Muslims in the shadow of war: Schism or continuity? *In* S. Gamage and I. Watson, eds., *Conflict and community in contemporary Sri Lanka,* pp. 218–28. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

MEYER, E. 1980. De la dette interne à la dette externe: Observations sur les mutations du crédit à Sri Lanka à la période coloniale. *Purusartha* 4: 207–25.

———. 1983. The plantation system and village structure in British Ceylon: Involution or evolution? *In* P. Robb, ed., *Rural South Asia: Linkages, change and development,* pp. 23–56. London: Curzon.

Meyer, E. 1998. A dramatic episode of labour migration: Marathi 'coolies' in the Sabaragamuwa rubber estates during the early 20th century. *Sabaragamuwa University journal* 1: 11–28.

Montani, A. 1999. On the move: A cultural study of contested space on the east coast of Sri Lanka. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh.

Moore, M. 1985. *The state and peasant politics in Sri Lanka*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moore, H. and M. Vaughan. 1994. *Cutting down trees: Gender, nutrition, and agricultural change in the northern province of Zambia, 1890–1990*. London: Currey.

Obeyesekere, G. 1981. *Medusa's hair: An essay on personal symbols and religious experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Peebles, P. 1990. Colonization and ethnic conflict in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka. *Journal of Asian studies* 49, 1: 30–55.

Roberts, M. 1982. *Caste conflict and elite formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Samaddar, R. 1999. *The marginal nation: Transborder migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Samaraweera, V. 1977. Land as 'patrimony': Nationalist response to immigrant labour demands for land in the early 20th century Sri Lanka. *Indian economic and social history review* 14, 3: 341–62.

Schiff, M. 1999. Trade, migration and welfare: The impact of social capital. *Policy Research Working Paper, 2044*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Spencer, J. 2000. *A Sinhala village in a time of trouble: Politics and change in Sri Lanka*. Second edition. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 2001. Commentary on Kaplan and Kelly 'nation and decolonization'. *Anthropological theory* 1, 4: 439–43.

Tinker, H. 1974. *A new system of slavery: The export of Indian labour overseas, 1830–1920*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Uyangoda, J. 1997. Academic texts on the Sri Lankan ethnic question as biographies of a decaying nation-state. *Nethra* 1, 3: 7–23.

Whitaker, M. 1999. Tigers and temples: The politics of nationalist and non-modern violence in Sri Lanka. *In* S. Gamage and I. Watson, eds., *Conflict and community in contemporary Sri Lanka*, pp. 183–95. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Wickramasinghe, N. 2001. Migration, migrant communities and otherness in twentieth-century Sinhala nationalism in Sri Lanka (up to independence). *In* C. Bates, ed., *Community, empire and migration: South Asians in diaspora*, pp. 153–84. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Of related interest

TRADITION PLURALISM AND IDENTITY
In Honour of T N Madan

Edited by
VEENA DAS ♦ DIPANKAR GUPTA ♦ PATRICIA UBEROI

Contributions to Indian Sociology ♦ Occasional Studies 8

The contributors of this volume address the linked themes of tradition, pluralism and identity across a wide range of topics including caste, communal identity, kinship, family, pilgrimage, traditional polity, ecology, social healing and the modern imaginary.

The papers in this collection demonstrate that the struggle by which a tradition must recognise itself is in plurality and change, rather than in stasis. They show how the web of relations forged between tradition and modernity leaves a mark on tradition as it is encoded in everyday life. Taking the discussion of these issues in many unexpected and new directions, this volume provides a compelling account of the contemporary tradition in South Asia.

With its careful attention to ethnographic and historical complexity in the region, this volume will undoubtedly deepen our understanding of both tradition and modernity in South Asia. It will be of great value to scholars interested in sociology, anthropology, religion, caste and kinship, history, ethnicity and popular culture.

CONTRIBUTORS: Frèdèrique Apffel-Margin ♦ Lawrence A. Babb ♦ Paul R. Brass ♦ Lionel Caplan ♦ Veena Das ♦ Diana L. Eck ♦ Harold A. Gould ♦ Dipankar Gupta ♦ Ravindra K. Jain ♦ R.S. Khare ♦ Arthur Kleinman ♦ McKim Marriott ♦ Dennis B. McGilvray ♦ Ashis Nandy ♦ Patrick Olivelle ♦ Llyod I. Rudolph ♦ Don Seeman ♦ Stanley J. Tambiah ♦ Patricia Uberoi

240mm x 160mm ♦ hb ♦ 476pp. ♦ 1999

Sage Publications
New Delhi ♦ Thousand Oaks ♦ London

A case of capital-rich under-development: The paradoxical consequences of successful transnational entrepreneurship from Mirpur

Roger Ballard

No other district in Pakistan has seen a higher proportion of its population engage in transnational migration than Mirpur, and from nowhere else have a higher proportion of such migrants successfully established themselves in Britain. Yet despite the intensity of the trans-local linkages which have thereby been created, and the huge flow of remittance capital into a district which otherwise occupies a thoroughly marginalised position on the global periphery, in no way has this served to stimulate any kind of sustainable pattern of economic development. This article sets out to place these developments in their appropriate historical, political, environmental, local and global contexts in an effort to establish how and why it is that the Mirpuris' otherwise sophisticated and successful entrepreneurial capabilities have not led to more successful and sustainable outcomes in their home base. There are good reasons why the lessons that can be learned in Mirpur could well be applicable elsewhere.

'You're going to Mirpur? So many people have gone to England, they are all rich. Big houses, so many cars: they have everything they want there'
(Taxi driver in Rawalpindi)

Roger Ballard is the Director of the Centre for Applied South Asian Studies, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, UK.

Acknowledgements: The fieldwork in Pakistan on which the article is based was largely supported by ESRC research grants.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

As the scale of labour migration at a global level grows ever larger by the day, there are some very real senses in which 'trickle down' has indeed begun to take place—at least for a fortunate few. This is not so obvious when impoverished small farmers set out for the shanty-towns which surround virtually every megapolis in Asia, Africa and Latin America in a desperate search for better opportunities. However, those with the good fortune to have found their way into the metropolitan centres in Euro-America have a much better prospect of carving out a brighter future for themselves and their families in our increasingly globalised world. Achieving that goal is, of course, far from straightforward. Having entrepreneurially pressed their way into such arenas 'from below' (Smith and Guarnizo 1998), such transnational migrants still find themselves faced with the challenging task of negotiating their way through and around the institutionalised patterns of racial and ethnic exclusionism which are routinely strewn in the path of such 'alien' interlopers.

However, this article is not concerned with the scale and character of those obstacles, nor with the often highly effective strategies which many of these 'interlopers' have begun to deploy in order to circumvent these obstacles, nor even with their success in so doing: rather it is to explore what consequences successful transnational migration may have for the home-base areas from which the migrant flow initially took off. In this sense Mirpur is no exception. In almost every country in the non-industrialised world, similar developments can be found. Hence the inhabitants of a specific region, area, and sometimes simply a small cluster of villages are similarly identified as having 'made it' in the global labour market, with the result that everyone with the good fortune to live there is popularly regarded as having become as rich as Croesus—at least by local standards. But although it is self-evident that an enormous amount of new-found wealth has arrived in such areas, on just what basis has it been sent? Is the inflow merely a flash in the pan—or will it continue for the foreseeable future? On what is it spent, who made those decisions, and why? What impact have these developments had on the structure of the local socio-economic order, as well as that of the wider society within which these developments have been set? And perhaps most pertinently of all, what factors have governed the course which these processes have actually taken within this specific context? Are there circumstances in which different and more positive outcomes could have been achieved? In seeking to address these issues I will rely very largely on my own ethnographic observations of developments in the area made during the

course of a series of visits there—very briefly in 1972, then for a month in 1981, the best part of a year in 1984–85, and finally for a further three weeks in 2000—which were made to complement my much more detailed explorations of socio-cultural developments amongst South Asian settlers in the UK.

I
The export of labour from Pakistan

As in many other parts of the global periphery, the prospect of working overseas as a means of radically enhancing one's own, and one's family's capital assets is in no way an unfamiliar notion in a Pakistani context. Indeed it is widely accepted that those who have the wit and above all the good fortune to pull it off can expect access to untold wealth, especially if they can manage to establish a base in the metropolitan core of the global economy. Over the years Pakistan has been a major exporter of manpower. During the 1980s, when Pakistan's engagement with the global labour market reached its apogee, more than two million Pakistanis—or nearly 10 per cent of the country's entire adult male labour force—were working overseas, with the result that by 1983 the inflow of foreign exchange in the form of remittances from migrant workers was larger than that generated by all other physical exports combined (Planning Commission 1984; Gilani et al. 1981). Parallel with developments in a host of other manpower-exporting countries from Morocco to the Philippines, migrant remittances had come to play a crucial role in the national economy: they were quite literally keeping it afloat.

Whilst the global stock of migrant labour has since grown steadily larger during the course of the past two decades, the market has become increasingly competitive. As an ever growing number of hopeful entrepreneurs set off each year in search of work, global demand for unskilled labour has at best remained static, and in some spheres has shrunk dramatically. This has certainly been so in Pakistani emigrants' favourite destination, the oil-rich states of the Middle East. When both the price and the volume of production shot upwards in the late 1960s, bringing unprecedented wealth to the sparsely populated desert sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf, there was huge increase in construction activity as each sought to provide themselves with a more modern infrastructure. Jobs were available aplenty, wages were comparatively high, and hundreds of thousands of migrant workers from Pakistan began to take the short hop across the Indian Ocean to take advantage of the new opportunities. However, the

real bonanza did not last for long. As major infrastructural projects began to be completed, and as inflation steadily eroded the real value of oil exports, the demand for labour began to fall sharply just as Bangladeshis, Thais, Indonesians and many others began to force their way into the transnational labour market. To be sure, a fortunate few amongst the Pakistani pioneers did find immense prosperity in Dubai and Saudi Arabia, but as time passed the prospect of others following in their footsteps became increasingly small. As wage rates steadily declined, especially for those with few skills, the once-widespread dream of making one's fortune in the Middle East has faded, and Western Europe, and above all North America, have become recognised as the only arenas in which there is a realistic prospect of implementing such plans. Hence even though the difficulty and cost of reaching those destinations has been rising in direct proportion to the height of the barriers of immigration control, which have progressively been erected around every part of the metropolitan world, finding one's way through those barriers—no matter what the basis of doing so may be—is popularly viewed as offering access to untold opportunities.

Experience in the Gulf

Yet just how have those who have managed to break through—whether to the Gulf or the metropolitan heartlands—actually fared? Most of those who were able to surf the waves of global opportunity as far as Western Europe and North America have indeed gained access to enormous prosperity, at least in local Pakistani terms. Nevertheless it is now quite clear they are very much amongst the fortunate few. However, the experiences of those who got no further than the oil-rich Middle East, although much greater in number, have been much more mixed. To be sure, a few Gulf settlers did make vast fortunes, but these were usually either the very earliest of pioneers, or (more usually) members of Pakistan's small but well-educated élite, most of whom took advantage of prior family contact to make the most of local opportunities.

But although the wealth of such entrepreneurs in Dubai (which is closer to Karachi than the national capital in Islamabad) led many of their compatriots to conclude that migration automatically gave rise to immense rewards, the vast majority of those who followed in their footsteps made much more modest progress. Even so, this still seemed quite substantial in local Pakistani terms; hardly anyone failed to return without a large-screen television, as well as sufficient cash savings to comprehensively

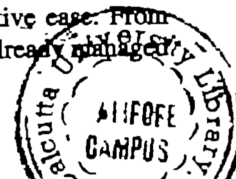
rebuild their family house. But once stripped of its superficial gloss, most Pakistanis' experience of the Middle Eastern dimension of the global labour market was chastening.

Although a short passage across the Indian Ocean introduced them to an immensely wealthy world, its downside was only too obvious. Even though the local population was Muslim like themselves, religious brotherhood—as they soon discovered—was of little significance with respect to those who were not Arabs. Pakistanis, and most especially those working as unskilled labourers, were routinely treated as the lowest of the low. Even at the best of times they had very limited bargaining power, but their room for manoeuvre contracted yet further as the arrival of migrant labour from ever further afield rendered competition all the more vicious. Thus whilst most (but by no means all) Pakistani returnees from the Gulf came home richer than they left, their achievements were often substantially less than those for which they had hoped.

Migration fever

Why, then, does migration fever persist? However remote the imagined places may be, satellite TV has shrunk the world. Hence even the poorest families in Pakistan now have access to images of what they perceive as the consumer-driven paradise of Euro-America. It is also well known that even rural Pakistanis can gain access to it, given that this is now a routine trope in Bollywood films. Moreover, the means of access to that world is signalled by travel agents in every major *bazaar*, who routinely advertise their ability (albeit for sky-high fees) to assist hopeful entrepreneurs to squeeze their way through immigration restrictions to the other side of the fence. Such is the strength of the temptation that plenty of takers still come forward to pay the wildly inflated fees demanded, even if they often have to mortgage themselves to the hilt to raise the necessary cash. After all, some do indeed make it to the other side—even though many are apprehended along the way.

However, the prospect of those who lack prior contacts making a success of transnational migration is becoming increasingly remote, if only because the exclusionary walls protecting the most alluring targets in Euro-America are now so robust that lone individuals have little chance of penetrating them. Nevertheless these barriers are far from being wholly impermeable, for those with access to the requisite assets—no less of kinship than of capital—can penetrate them with relative ease. From this perspective, those Pakistanis whose kinsfolk have already managed


Calcutta University Library ALIPORE CAMPUS

to establish a foothold elsewhere in the global arena can be seen to occupy a very specific position of privilege.

Transnational networks amongst the élite

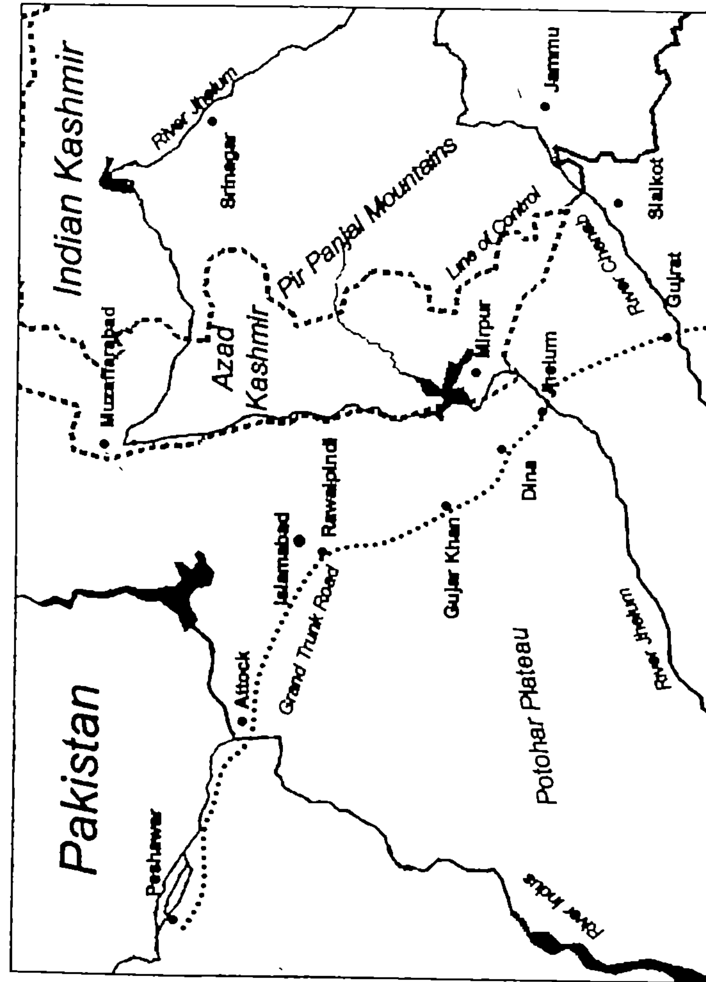
Most members of Pakistan's relatively tiny well-educated élite can be so identified. Although routinely described as 'feudal' by their many critics, most members of this élite now occupy senior positions in the military, or in government service. However, few such families have been content to rest on these locally-achieved laurels: almost all have by now sent at least one of their offspring overseas for higher education, most usually to the United States. England is much less favoured than it once was: not only are the fees extracted from overseas students extremely high, but British authorities are extremely reluctant to offer a permanent right of abode to people of South Asian origin, even if they have gained post-graduate qualifications during their stay. By contrast, these can not only be obtained more cheaply in the United States, but there are few obstacles to taking a job once one's studies have been completed, and a green card usually follows before long.

Those who obtain permanent rights of residence—whether in the USA, the UK, or Australia—not only secure their own future in transnational space, but also put themselves in a position where they can enable others to join them, either as spouses or as family dependants. As a result transnational activity has become a routine component of everyday life for most members of Pakistan's élite. Almost all its members now have offspring who have put down roots in Euro-America, either because they went there for their education, or because they were sent as brides to join such highly educated husbands. The resultant bridgeheads not only make visits overseas much more straightforward, but also open a relatively straightforward avenue to overseas residence for all members of the extended family. Nor is that all. Acutely aware of the fragility of Pakistan's economy, most élite families have long since taken the opportunity to squirrel away the bulk of their savings in non-depreciating currencies overseas. Hence they experience few constraints on global mobility. With globally distributed kinship networks, many older members of the élite have become frequent flyers. For those who consider themselves leading members of polite society in I-8 (Islamabad), in Gulberg (Lahore) and Clifton (Karachi), regular shopping trips to

London—with Harrods as the principal target—are now absolutely *de rigueur*; and such visits are so much more pleasant if one can stay with one's relatives, rather than in some anonymous hotel.

That Pakistan's élite should have taken systematic advantage of transnational opportunities should come as no surprise: kleptocratic élites throughout the global periphery have also adopted similar strategies. Nevertheless there are some good reasons why members of Pakistan's élite should have become particularly skilled exponents of this art. First, a high proportion of those who make up Pakistan's current élite arrived as footloose refugees from India in 1947: for them the land of Pakistan is, therefore, only in the loosest sense their real home. Second, and just as significantly, they have made just as extensive a use of the tight networks of reciprocity within their largely endogamous *biraderis* (descent groups) to consolidate their position of hegemonic dominance within the Pakistani state. Having developed these strategies within their immediate local arena, their redeployment on a global scale was quite straightforward.

If transnational activity is, therefore, by no means an unusual or unexpected phenomenon in Pakistan, it is also accompanied by a routine expectation that its principal exponents will and should be members of Pakistan's much priviledge élite. Given those expectations, the success of such a manifestly 'undeserving' group as the Mirpuris in reaping the benefits of transnational entrepreneurship is a source of both wonderment and surprise. After all, the élite reason, Mirpur lies in the peripheral border region of Azad Kashmir, whose population is routinely viewed as 'backward' by the inhabitants of more 'sophisticated' areas to the west and south. Before mass emigration took off, Mirpuris were undoubtedly less well off than their neighbours: Azad Kashmir has long been one of the poorest, most marginalised and hence infrastructurally ill-supported parts of Pakistan. Yet despite having no significant assets on which to rely other than their labour power, migrants from this area have proved to be supremely successful transnational entrepreneurs. Well over half the district's population now lives overseas, and as much as two-thirds of Britain's Pakistani population is drawn either from Mirpur district itself, or from areas immediately to its north, west and south. As the map shows, the east is effectively closed off by the cease-fire line between the Indian and Pakistani-controlled parts of Kashmir.



Map 1
The Potohar Region

II
Emigration from Mirpur

How is all this to be explained? It is worth noting that in comparison with in-comers from elsewhere in the subcontinent, the Pakistanis (of whom the Mirpuri population forms such a large component) are one of the least upwardly mobile sections of Britain's South Asian population (Modood et al. 1997). If, however, one rates the Mirpuris solely in terms of their capacity to transform their initial position as subsistence farmers eking out a living on the global periphery into that of permanent residents of the metropolitan world, their success as sanctions-busting people-shifters on a global scale has been astounding. Despite the immense efforts made by successive British governments to stem the inflow of non-European settlers during the past forty years, much of which has specifically been directed at the inflow from Pakistan, very little has in fact been achieved. No other group has been more adept at exploiting every available loophole, such that, for example, over 10,000 Pakistani spouses—the majority of whom are from Mirpur—are currently being granted right of entry into the UK each year (Ballard 1999; Home Office 2001).

Hence as far as the inhabitants of most of the rest of Pakistan are concerned, the Mirpuris have hit the jackpot. Despite their origins in a hitherto insignificant district in the outer foothills of the Pir Panjal, its inhabitants appear to have made better progress through the global game of transnational snakes and ladders than any of their neighbours. So how is their success to be explained, and is that success really all that it seems? Before addressing these questions in detail, a few preliminary remarks are in order. First, although the Mirpuris have undoubtedly been immensely successful entrepreneurs, there is no evidence that they are *more* entrepreneurially-minded than their neighbours. If so, it could well be that their success is best attributable not to a higher complement of skill, but to the fact that they have been the fortunate beneficiaries of a diverse series of historical contingencies. Second, we will also need to take a very sceptical view of what 'success' has actually entailed. As we shall see, jealous outsiders can all too easily mistake that which glistens for real gold.

Emigration from Mirpur in a historical context

Given the district's location, its population has long been relatively impoverished. With a relatively high population density per cultivable

acre, landholdings have always been substantially smaller than those in Punjab proper, and given that the terrain made irrigation difficult to organise, leaving no alternative but to rely on rainfall, crop yields were comparatively low, although relatively reliable (Ballard 1983). Nevertheless it was exceptional in one crucial respect, for the district stands at the point where the rivers Poonch and Jhelum come together before breaking out of the forested hills into the largely treeless plains, thence to become navigable. Not only did this subsequently render it an ideal location for the construction of a large hydroelectric project, but long before the Mangla Dam was even dreamed of, it was an equally ideal spot for building the boats which carried Punjabi merchandise down to the ancient port of Lahori Bandar where the Indus delta spills out into the Indian Ocean nearly a thousand miles to the south. It is worth emphasising that this trading connection is in no sense a modern phenomenon: excavations at Lothal in Gujarat have uncovered a port which also served a similar purpose more than 4,500 years ago (Allchin and Allchin 1982: 173). One further specificity is also worth bearing in mind: the South Asian tradition that the construction and navigation of boats is a seamless whole. Hence a prior spell in the boat-building yard is a necessary component of a boatman's apprenticeship.

Why might this matter? When I first began researching Pakistani migration to Britain, I was extremely puzzled as to why so many of the earliest settlers were drawn either from Mirpur district, or from the equally remote Attock district a 100 miles further to the north-west. Part of the puzzle was solved when I discovered that virtually all of these pioneers were ex-seamen, and that the vast majority of the stokers who were recruited to work on British steamships sailing out of Bombay and Karachi from the 1880s right through until the late 1940s (when oil replaced coal) were drawn from these two districts. But this time the shift simply deepened the puzzle yet further. Just how had men from these two districts so far from the sea come to monopolise this particular niche in the labour market, just as men from a few localities such as the equally remote district of Sylhet in north-eastern Bengal had gained a similar monopoly in steamships sailing out of Calcutta and Chittagong (Adams 1987)?

Putting together these South Asian conventions of ship construction and seamanship, the history of water-borne trade between Punjab and the Indian Ocean, and the strategic geographical location of both Mirpur and Attock districts, a plausible explanation for these developments

begins to emerge. Given that landholdings in these hilly areas are very much smaller than those in the open and well-irrigated plains further to the south, the operation of the developmental cycle within peasant farming households has often led to them being burdened by a temporary excess of male labour. Families in such a position have every reason to send off their sons to earn a cash income elsewhere, which will then supplement the group's collective resources. However, it is reasonable to assume that in this case they also took advantage of an additional contingency: the presence of boat-building centres in their immediate neighbourhood, through which they could also gain access to employment in the long-distance river trade. If so, it follows that men from these two areas will have played a salient role in—and may even have virtually monopolised—employment on the boats which had for centuries sailed back and forth between the Punjab's manufacturing centres and its *entrepôt* at Lahori Bandar on the shores of the Indian Ocean.

The arrival of the British in South Asia had far-reaching consequences for this long established pattern of trade, especially when railway links running inland from Bombay and Karachi finally reached Lahore during the 1870s. As soon as this connection was made, the slow and labour-intensive river trade was undercut by rail transport, which was so much swifter, and probably cheaper too. All the long-distance boatmen were thereby rendered instantly redundant. However, by a stroke of good fortune, this disaster appears to have struck just as the British merchant navy was switching from sail to steam, thus generating an urgent demand for men willing and able to fulfil the most challenging task of all on the new steamships: stoking the boilers. It would appear that this was swiftly identified as an opportunity which was too good to miss. Before long, a small number of Mirpuris and Chhachis from Attock district—who I can only assume were ex-boatmen—managed to secure a virtual monopoly of the post of *sirhang* (engine-room labour foreman) on British ships operating out of both Bombay and Karachi. By the early years of the 20th century, the whole process was so well-established that a British official observed:

> From the north-east corner of Chhach large numbers of men go out as stokers on the P. & O. and British India boats and come back shattered in health but full of money. Others used to go as hawkers to Australia, and indeed there are few parts of the Empire that someone from Chhach has not visited (Attock District Gazetteer 1907: 51).

What, though, about the subsequent connection with the UK? In yet another fortuitous coincidence, large sections of British industry were experiencing extreme difficulty in recruiting unskilled manpower just as all the elderly steamships began to be decommissioned in the aftermath of the Second World War. In these circumstances Mirpuri seamen took the obvious next step: having got themselves discharged in British ports rather than Karachi, they joined those of their compatriots whose ships had been torpedoed beneath them during the Second World War, and had subsequently been directed to work in labour hungry munitions factories in Birmingham and Bradford (Dahya 1974).

With these bridgeheads in place, an ever-escalating process of chain migration soon took off. The demand for labour in West Midlands foundries as well as in the textile mills of the Pennine region was virtually inexhaustible, and the wages on offer were nothing short of spectacular by local Mirpuri standards. Transnational activity began to grow exponentially. As soon as each new arrival had established himself, he would promptly set about assisting his own kinsfolk to join him. Having thereby constructed a whole series of conveyor belts which led straight to the heart of Britain's industrial cities, a large proportion of Mirpur's population have been able to take a relatively easy ride directly from the periphery to the metropolis, and in doing so play an elaborate, but for the most part highly successful, game of cat and mouse with Britain's immigration authorities (Saifullah Khan 1977).

In this respect fortune once again smiled on the Mirpuris, largely as a result of the relative generosity with which Commonwealth citizens are treated in Britain once they have been granted permanent right of abode. This usually occurs little more than twelve months after having first arrived, and with such rights under their belts, the first tranche of immigration controls which were imposed during the early 1960s had very little impact on Mirpuri immigrants. Indeed the voucher system, which required potential migrants who were Commonwealth citizens to show they had a job to go to as a prerequisite for the grant of a visa, proved to be a godsend. The foundries and mills in which most migrants by then worked were still acutely short of hands, so foremen were only too ready to sign papers which enabled their existing employees' kinsfolk to come and work there too. Nor was the abolition of the voucher system much of a setback either, for they promptly fell back on their rights of family reunion to call over their teenage sons—although much more rarely so their wives and daughters—to join them in Britain. But when the immigration authorities sought to close this 'loophole' by refusing entry to

settlers' sons unless they were also accompanied by their wives and sisters, the move had the opposite of the desired effect (Ballard 1996). By now the community had become well rooted in Britain, with the result that an ever-increasing number of settlers began to take the view that it was now both safe and sensible to call the female members of their families over to join them.

In switching to a strategy of family reunion, Mirpuris were merely following a lead which had already been set by immigrants from elsewhere in the subcontinent. In the 1970s, however, a further dimension began to cut in: the extent to which the operation of their distinctive marriage rules might provide a vehicle through which to extend the process of chain migration for a further generation. In sharp contrast to their Hindu and Sikh counterparts, Muslim custom and practice in Mirpur not only permits close kin marriage, but actively promotes such unions: over 60 per cent of all marriages are contracted between first cousins (Ballard 1990; Shaw 2001). As a result, the inflow of settlers from Mirpur has been sustained long after the initial process of family reunion was complete. The reason is quite straightforward: British-based Mirpuri parents still exhibit a strong preference for arranging the marriages of their locally-born offspring with the sons and daughters of their immediate kinsfolk back home, virtually all of whom promptly apply for entry permits to Britain. So it is that around 10,000 newly married Mirpuri brides and grooms currently enter the UK each year, almost all of them coming to join their British passport-holding cousins (Home Office 2001).

The dynamics of transnational networks

Whilst this inflow further reinforces the scale of the Mirpuri presence in Britain, the traffic is far from being one way. Whilst only a tiny minority of settlers have ever returned to Mirpur permanently—not least because both standards of living and income-earning opportunities are so much greater overseas than they are back home—their passage to Britain has not significantly undermined their involvement in networks of kinship reciprocity. It is easy to see why: not only were inter- and intra-*biraderi* reciprocities the principle vehicle through which the migration process was itself organised (Werbner 1990), they also provided the foundation for the processes of strategic adaptation which settlers deployed as they set about re-establishing themselves on their own terms in their new environment. Given that kinship remains the principle vehicle for the articulation of processes of translocal entrepreneurship, *biraderi*-based

networks are certainly not being eroded by their geographical extension: rather they have now become arenas within which capital resources—whether of information, ideas, resources and of course members of the network themselves—have begun to circulate on an increasingly global scale.

In doing so, those involved have had no hesitation in bending technological advances to their purposes: information exchange has not only become much speedier, but its content has grown steadily richer as letters have successively been replaced by audiotapes, telephone calls and, most recently of all, by the Internet. Likewise, long and expensive voyages by sea have now been replaced by air travel, which has itself become increasingly cheap. Physical movements back and forth have become steadily more frequent. The result is plain to see: amongst the Mirpuris no less than any other section of the South Asian diaspora, a complex web of *biraderi*-based networks now supports the ever more active circulation of assets on a global scale.

Moreover the population base which supports this transnational activity is expanding exponentially. Already at least a quarter of a million strong, Britain's Mirpuri population is still rising rapidly. Not only do more than half of all British-based Mirpuris still obtain spouses from back home, but their fertility rates, although slightly lower than those in the previous generation, are still close to double replacement level (Ballard 1999). This has not only led to a rapid growth in the scale of each of their still highly localised ethnic colonies, but has also precipitated an equally rapid escalation in the scale and frequency of visits back home. Whether made in order to provide medical assistance to ageing parents, to attend marriages, funerals and other rites of passage, to oversee the construction of a long dreamed-of house in which to enjoy the pleasures of retirement, or to sort out festering disputes over property, virtually all such visits are driven by the imperatives of kinship; and since each such visit yet further reinforces the binding strength of such networks, they are thereby perpetuated further. Given that the majority of British-based Mirpuris remain in active communication with their kin back home, they also visit them as frequently as their finances allow. As a result, the best part of 5,000 free-spending visitors from Britain now arrive in Mirpur every month, and between them remit somewhere between £500 million and £1 billion back home each year. All this has had a far-reaching impact on the district's local economy (Ballard 2002).

The new face of Mirpur

Thanks to the scale of the district's transnational connections, visitors to Mirpur now find themselves confronted with a very different set of visual images from those which they would have encountered half a century ago, and which can still be encountered in much of the rest of rural Pakistan. Despite its unpromising location in the bare and badly eroded outer foothills of the Pir Panjal, the absence of any kind of industrial base,[1] its contemporary lack of agricultural self-sufficiency, let alone the consequences of having had the greater part of its spatial core flooded by the Mangla Dam, Mirpur district appears—at least on the face of it—to exude prosperity.

As visitors drive up the busy main road into Mirpur town,[2] they are greeted by spectacularly designed multi-storey residences climbing up the hillside, and the same pattern continues within the town itself. To be sure, many plots still await development, but the majority now host buildings which would not look out of place in affluent Islamabad. Nor is this just an urban phenomenon: if anything there has been an even more spectacular building boom in the countryside on the far side of the Mangla reservoir, where almost every hamlet seems to boast three, four and even five-storied buildings rearing into the sky. In sharp contrast to the rest of rural Pakistan, there is hardly a bullock cart or a bicycle to be seen: instead cars and swarms of Japanese motor cycles fill the roads. The *bazaars* and *qasbahs* seem equally prosperous—at least in comparison with those elsewhere. Many support at least one western-style hotel: the accommodation on offer is very limited, but their restaurants and function rooms are frequently filled to capacity. Businesses which proudly announce themselves as 'Supermarkets' also do well as they set about meeting visitors' essential needs for tomato ketchup, cornflakes, Nescafé, lemonade and Coca-Cola. Likewise a series of newly constructed off-street 'Plazas' mimic their metropolitan counterparts by playing host to a warren of smaller shops selling all manner of consumer goods: ladies' shoes, ready-made clothing, crockery and cutlery, children's toys and all sorts

[1] Even the logging industry has now come virtually to a halt, largely as a result of over-exploitation of the forests in the immediate post-British period.

[2] The old town has long since been swamped by the waters of the dam, although its ghostly ruins reappear every summer when the water level is low. New Mirpur is built on a stony (and hence largely barren) alluvial outcrop about a mile further to the south.

of decorative domestic trinkets. With the exception of the élite, who, as we have seen are dismissive of Mirpur's attempts at sophistication, visitors from elsewhere in Pakistan are invariably much impressed: thanks to the scale of Mirpur's transnational connections, the district gives every appearance of becoming steadily richer and more prosperous, more progressive, and hence more 'modern' than any other. Indeed as many residents of Mirpur town now proudly boast, 'it is just like Islamabad'.

III
The impact of the new wealth: Economic development—or economic dependency?

Yet just how accurate are these perceptions? That a huge volume of financial capital has flowed into the local economy during the course of the past half century is clear enough: indeed during the 1970s Mirpur became one of the most over-banked areas in the entire subcontinent. All five of Pakistan's major banks eagerly established branches in every village to soak up the flood of remittance income. Business is much quieter today, however. As the 1980s progressed, the inflow of remittances from the UK through official channels has declined sharply. As a result most rural branches have now been closed down, although the larger units into which they have been consolidated still have millions of rupees on deposit. However, there have been several dimensions to these changes. In part, the decline has been real enough. Not only did settlers' propensity to save drop sharply once they had reunited their families, but having done so many also found themselves facing another unforeseeable—but in this case most unwelcome—contingency. In the early 1980s the textile and heavy engineering industries on which they had hitherto relied for employment hit the buffers: as a result a high proportion of the adult males found themselves made redundant, and a large proportion of those who were aged over forty when the collapse occurred have never again been in regular employment.

However, since then much has changed. Despite the devastating impact of this recession-induced setback, the earning power of the younger generation gradually came on stream during the 1990s. This was largely a result of the opening up of all sorts of new niches for income generation, most notably through various forms of self-employment such as taxi-driving and take-aways (Kalra 2000). But just as family incomes began to recover, an ever-increasing number of the earliest settlers began to

reach what they regarded as retirement age. This introduced another set of contingencies. Many of the early settlers began to seriously explore the prospect of implementing a long-standing dream: to construct a spanking new residence in the land which they had cherished in their memories for so many years. Moreover, the prospect of doing so began to look ever more realistic. As the value of the Pakistani rupee declined precipitously during the late 1990s, the purchasing power of their sterling savings back home in Mirpur began to increase by leaps and bounds. Hence there was a sudden upsurge in the scale of remittances from Britain to Pakistan, although in this case a large proportion of the funds were routed through informal *hawala* banking systems. These offered much speedier rates of transmission, as well as substantially higher exchange rates than those available within the formal banking system.

So it is that at least in terms of capital, money is no great problem in Mirpur. Most of the local banks still have a huge volume of funds lying on deposit, the bulk of which was sent back by migrants during the earlier years of prosperity; and as Mirpuris in Britain have gradually grown more prosperous, the remittance flow has once again revived. As the recipient, once again, of a powerful cash boost from overseas, Mirpur's local economy can only be described as capital-rich, a condition which it has now enjoyed for the best part of three decades. On the face of it, all this might have been expected to have a very positive effect, since lack of access to adequate working capital is routinely identified as one of the principal obstacles to economic development in rural areas on the global periphery. Yet although this obstacle has been entirely eliminated in Mirpur, there has been little sign of real and sustainable economic growth, for the bulk of the capital inflow has been invested in real estate: either in buying land, in building houses for themselves and their families, or in the construction of commercial property. One of the central consequences of all this is that the value of land, and especially those plots which might conceivably be suitable for residential or commercial development, has been subject to quite spectacular inflation. This has, of course, enabled a number of canny speculators to make a great deal of money through buying and selling real estate. Nevertheless it is quite clear that the paper profits—and the apparent prosperity—thereby generated are only as stable as the continued inflow of remittances.

However, as we have seen, that inflow is far from stable. As a result, Mirpur has witnessed a series of short-term housing booms, the first of which reached its peak during the mid-1970s. By then the pioneer generation of migrants were flush with savings: few had yet called their wives

and children to join them in Britain, and the industrial recession of the early 1980s had yet to set in. The resulting boom in house construction generated an escalating demand for bricks, cement, steel reinforcement rods, electric wiring and so forth, as well as the labour needed to turn these raw materials into housing. The *bazaars* began to boom, and this encouraged many returnees to invest in the construction of rows of shop units in every apparently commercially viable location. Those which found tenants brought in excellent rents, at least whilst the boom was on.

But the 1980s brought on even swifter collapse. As the level of remittances dropped sharply, Mirpur's local economy experienced a sharp recession. The demand for building materials faded away, and with it the volume of commercial activity in every *bazaar*. It also became clear that there was a huge over supply of speculatively built commercial property: whole rows of newly-built shop units never saw a tenant, and soon began to fall into decay (Ballard 1983, 1989). Yet although my observations of the situation in the mid-1980s led me to make some very gloomy prognoses for the likely course of economic development in Mirpur, my next field trip to Mirpur in early 2000 revealed that the worst of my predictions had been wholly unfounded. Whilst Mirpur's local economy remains as dependent as ever on remittance inflows, these did not go into permanent decline. By the turn of the millennium, large-scale investment in real estate and especially in housing had picked up once again, as had commercial initiatives in the *bazaar*, even if both proved to have moved off in some novel directions.

A dynamic perspective on transnational connections

Although local communities on the global periphery whose members have established a bridgehead in the prosperous metropolitan core are in a position to reap all manner of advantages from their transnational connections, it is now becoming quite clear that these connections have an internal dynamic of their own. In the Mirpuri case, the impact of two sets of factors has been particularly salient: first, the effect which processes of growth and retrenchment in the wider British economy have had on the income-generating niches which Mirpuri settlers have carved out for themselves; and second, the operation of developmental cycles within the settlers' domestic groups. These processes have begun to interact with one another in increasingly complex ways.

The impact of the economic dimension of these processes is obvious enough: given the strength of the transnational linkages which have now been established between the settlers' home base and their bridgeheads in urban Britain, levels of economic activity in Mirpur are increasingly a function of the levels of prosperity enjoyed by settlers in the UK. That is not all, however, for this association has been further conditioned by the passage of domestic groups through their own characteristic developmental cycles. The same may well be true elsewhere.

Way back in the early 1960s when mass migration to Britain first took off, the vast majority of those who left were young men, almost all of whom were either unmarried, or had recently been provided with a spouse in the hope that that attachment would be a further guarantee against them going astray. The initial objective of virtually all these early pioneers was quite straightforward: to earn and save as much as possible as quickly as possible to supplement their families' collective capital assets. Hence as soon as they had paid off the cost of moving overseas, they began to remit the bulk of their saving back home. Parallel with the behaviour of rural emigrants the world over, these remittances were invariably invested either in buying more agricultural land, or in renovating—or better still in comprehensively rebuilding—the family home. But since this *modus operandi* requires an almost total deferral of gratification, no one can keep it up for ever. At some stage migrants conclude that they have reached their target and hence return home, or—at the other end of the scale, begin to feel sufficiently secure to transfer their domestic world to their new environment by calling over their wives and children. There is also an intermediate option between these two extremes for those who stay on abroad for many years: to punctuate their hard life of labour with periodic furloughs back home.

Whilst virtually all South Asian settlers in Britain have by now abandoned the spartan existence of the sojourner's life-style as a result of having reconstituted a full-fledged domestic world around themselves, the speed with which they have done so has varied enormously. In this respect the Mirpuris were a great deal more tardy than their Sikh and Hindu counterparts from across the border in India. Although they had also established their initial bridgeheads in Britain in the early 1950s, by the early 1970s the Sikhs and Hindus had largely completed the move to family reunion just as the Mirpuris were beginning to show the first signs of moving in that direction. But regardless of just when the transition occurred in any given community, the changes precipitated by the arrival of wives and children were far-reaching.

As former sojourners scraped together all the resources they could lay their hands on to buy, renovate and extend a house in which to accommodate their reunited families, the all-male households in which settlers had previously lived lives of the utmost frugality (Hussein 2000) soon began to disappear. But since their reunited families required a much higher level of spending than before, and since they also had to contend with a severe recession—and very often with redundancy—during the late 1970s, the scale of the remittances which they were in a position to make dropped precipitously.

However, that episode is now two decades behind us, and much has changed since then. In particular, an ever-increasing number of the early settlers have begun to reach what they consider to be retirement age, not least because their offspring—most of whom are now British-born—have by now become the principal income-earners within each extended household. As a result many elders' thoughts are turning towards the fulfilment of a long cherished dream: to build a really spectacular dwelling back in their home village in celebration of the prosperity they have achieved during the course of a lifetime of labour overseas. However, in what can only be regarded as an equally unpredictable contingency, the sharp growth of the number of elders wishing to implement such plans also coincided—as we have seen—with a sharp inflation in the value of their sterling savings in rupee terms, and the prospect of turning such dreams into reality has become ever more enticing. However, a further factor stirring up this mixture has been the intensely competitive character of interpersonal relationships in Mirpuri contexts, which is itself the outcome of constant efforts by members of the largely endogamous *biraderi* to upstage one another. This tendency is once again deeply rooted in local cultural traditions.

As is commonplace throughout the Punjab region, well over half the local population belongs to one or the other of a small number of castes of peasant farmers. Within each such caste, the members of every family—be they Muslim, Hindu or Sikh—take it for granted that they are in no way inferior to any other in the *biraderi*. However, this fierce commitment to equality is also accompanied by a deep-rooted suspicion (and sometimes a paranoid fear) that one's rivals, and most especially one's immediate neighbours, are busy seeking to compromise one's own family's position of honourable autonomy: by sneakily getting ahead they are implicitly placing rivals in their shadow. Once this mindset is well-established, members of every family soon begin to subject the behaviour of all their neighbours to the closest critical scrutiny, partly to

ensure their rivals are not getting too far ahead, and partly to accumulate the ammunition to undermine their pretensions, should their rivals have the temerity to seek to outshine them. Besides generating endless bickering within each *biraderi*—so much so that the consequent centrifugal tendencies often appear to be only marginally outweighed by the common interests which hold the group together—these processes have had a far-reaching impact on Mirpur's built environment. Given the strength of these forces of mutual competition, every successive returnee tends to be driven to engage in a yet more spectacular housing project than any of those completed by his immediate neighbours.

The second housing boom

The result of all this has been a second housing boom, which has in many ways proved to be even more spectacular than that which peaked during the late 1970s. Whilst the location of the new construction initiatives is much the same as before, since most returnees remain as determined as ever to build on their own home ground, their design is startlingly novel. Not only do the new buildings rear three, four or even five-storeys into the sky, but they often call dramatic attention to themselves through elaborately eye-catching external decorations. Such is the strength of the visual impact of these buildings that one is forced to ask what these constructions are actually *for*, especially when one discovers that almost all are barely furnished within, and that the building itself was very often locked almost as soon as it was completed. Having finished the job, the owner had simply returned to Britain. A second striking feature of the current crop of houses, for which the term 'skyscraper' is often not out of place, is that they contradict all the well-established local conventions of house construction. Most of the old-style houses, including those which were built during the 1970s, rose no more than two-storeys; moreover they were invariably hidden behind a high bare wall running right round the larger plot within which the house stood. A house concealed behind these outer walls was almost completely hidden from external gaze, enabling family members—and most especially the women—to conduct their domestic affairs in complete privacy.

How can the change in style best be accounted for? Whilst the houses which returnees constructed during the first housing boom can be described as machines for living in, since they provided more rooms, more space and more privacy, albeit with sufficient external markers to underline the family's material success, the new constructions completely

reverse these priorities. Far from being machines for living in, they are best understood as vehicles which very publicly express the extent of their builder's achievements, most especially in comparison with those of their immediate neighbours. Hence the competitively driven urge to add extra storeys and ever more flashy decoration, as well as the prominent location of so many of the new edifices. But although such buildings are very effective symbols of 'modernity' and 'progress', they are not of much use for anything else. No one ever sits—or would wish to sit—and publicly expose themselves on their lofty balconies; such brazen behaviour would be viewed as quite shameless. And whilst these buildings may have cavernous (and secluded) interiors at ground level, they are not for living in on a regular basis either—although they provide a spectacular arena within which to host marriage celebrations and so forth, and for which all the necessary furnishings and equipment can be hired in on a daily basis. In other words, what these buildings are clearly not designed or maintained for is to facilitate a comfortable domestic life on a permanent basis.[3]

Urban developments

Although the greater part of Mirpur district is still thoroughly rural in character, albeit with an increasing number of 'skyscrapers', changes which are equally paradoxical in character have recently begun to manifest themselves in Mirpur town itself, as well as other rural commercial centres. In addition to an ever-growing multitude of small specialist shops, the most striking recent development is the construction of off-street shopping arcades known as Plazas, into which a great deal of investment is now being poured. Although considerably smaller-scale than similar developments in Lahore and Rawalpindi, such developments explicitly mimic 'modern' architectural styles. However, their principal current purpose in settlements such as Dadial, Chakswari and Akalgarh can only be understood with reference to some much more 'traditional' considerations: the high degree of gender segregation which has long underpinned the local social order.

[3] In this respect I noticed a striking contrast between the building styles favoured by returnees from the UK and elsewhere in Europe, and those from the Gulf, who had no prospect of taking up permanent residence overseas. Gulf returnees displayed little interest in building 'skyscrapers'. Instead they preferred the secluded courtyard style which is much more in keeping with the demands of everyday domestic life.

In Mirpur—as in much of the rest of the Potohari culture zone—the rules of gender segregation are particularly strictly interpreted. Since traditional expectations held that it was not appropriate for women to leave their residential *dhoks* (hamlets) without good reason, women were effectively excluded from the *bazaar*; and because it was, therefore, very much a male space, it was men—or failing that children sent off by their mothers on specific errands—who made almost all household purchases. Women could usually only make purchases on their own account from the female pedlars who regularly brought round large baskets containing cloth, shawls and other trinkets for sale from door-to-door.

Despite the material impact of the district's transnational connections, and the fact that the rules of gender segregation have been substantially rewritten in the diaspora, these conventions still retain a powerful hold in rural Mirpur, where it is still considered unseemly for women to be seen in the open spaces of the *bazaar*. It is in this context that Plazas come into their own, always provided that one has access to a car, as most returnees do. In these circumstances, female returnees can circumvent local conventions by finding a male kinsman to drive them to the sheltered entrance which is a salient component of each Plaza, from where they can step straight inside an enclosed arena in which shopping can be conducted whilst sheltered from the public gaze, before being whisked back to the respectable seclusion of the domestic household.

However limited, ironic and indeed humiliating such 'freedom' may seem to young women who have been brought up in Britain, these practices must nevertheless be regarded as a significant departure from local norms. Where families lack routine access to a car, women still have to rely on their husbands to make all decisions with respect to purchases in the *bazaar*, so the female pedlars who bring round baskets of goods for sale from courtyard to courtyard continue to do very good business. Although in Britain Mirpuri women of all ages make regular shopping trips into the town centre, as yet female visitors from Britain have only managed to dent the edges of local custom and practice back in Mirpur.

Rural developments

By contrast with the slow pace of change in gender relations, the remittances to which transnational connections have given rise have had a much more dramatic—although no less paradoxical—impact on agriculture, which still remains the nominal bedrock of the local economy. Given a location unsuited to extensive irrigation—at least when using

more traditional technologies—Mirpur has never been particularly agriculturally prosperous. However, since the rainfall in this area is generally reliable, small-scale subsistence farming has long been the order of the day. But whilst the area was always self-suficient in food grain, there was rarely much of a surplus, so the principal reason why young men from this area have a long history of taking temporary employment elsewhere—whether as boatmen, stokers, or textile workers—was to add cash to their families' basic income from subsistence farming. But despite the district's long history of such external entrepreneurial engagements, it was not until the 1970s that these activities began to have a really significant effect on the local economy.

As we have seen, as the volume of remittances arriving from Britain grew, a boom in house construction began to occur. Local wage rates began to rise sharply in response to the ever-growing demand for labour, which in turn led to an increasing number of migrant workers being drawn in from other less favoured parts of Pakistan. Some were employed as labourers in the brickyards which sprang up throughout the district, whilst those with higher levels of skills took jobs as bricklayers, masons and carpenters. The building boom also generated all sorts of new commercial opportunities, with the result that the *bazaars* expanded rapidly to meet the escalating demand for cloth, shoes, and domestic hardware. In a further contingency, refugees from Afghanistan began to fill many of these new opportunities in the marketplace, a niche which they and their descendants still virtually monopolise to this day.

Yet even though remittances provided a very sharp boost to Mirpur's local economy, relatively few members of the local population took much advantage of these new opportunities, especially if—as was very soon almost universally the case—they belonged to a *biraderi* whose members had managed to establish a bridgehead overseas. In those circumstances most young men much preferred to wait for a call inviting them to join their kinsfolk abroad. Hence rather than regarding the remittance income that came their way as a source of capital around which to build a better future for themselves in Mirpur, the majority saw them as an opportunity to finance a more leisurely lifestyle. Hence, for example, motorcycles were very much more frequently purchased than tractors or irrigation pumps.

As a result, the massive inflow of remittances did next to nothing to stimulate the productive base of Mirpur's local economy. Whilst agriculture continues to be practised, only older men show much interest in doing so on a regular basis. Much of the more marginal land in the district

can now be better described as having been abandoned rather than fallow, and the yield obtained from the land which remains under cultivation is steadily falling, rather than rising. Most strikingly of all, especially in the light of the cash-rich state of the local economy, there has been no significant investment in agricultural machinery, in the installation of pump-driven irrigation systems, or in the development of new and more profitable crops such as fruits and vegetables—for which there is a ready market in nearby Islamabad. Agriculture is, therefore, very firmly in decline, even though the district's agricultural potential is undoubtedly very substantial.

Nor has there been any significant degree of industrial development. Whilst the Government of Pakistan has offered all sorts of tax breaks and low-cost loans to budding entrepreneurs prepared to set up industrial projects in the 'frontier zone' of Azad Kashmir, virtually all of those who took advantage of these schemes have turned out to be fraudsters. The outskirts of Mirpur town are littered with the shells of the factory buildings constructed to house these proposed enterprises, but the capital on which such businesses were initially established—most of which was borrowed from one or the other of the nationalised banks—has in most cases long since disappeared.[4] Hence, whilst Mirpur's prosperity is real enough in financial terms, in practice its effects have been little more than skin-deep. Visitors may indeed be impressed by the presence of a superficial gloss which is entirely absent from those parts of rural Pakistan whose inhabitants do not enjoy the benefits of transnational connections, but the lack of productive investment has been so serious that the non-remittance dependent sectors of Mirpur's local economy have now gone into severe decline. If the remittances were ever to dry up again, the local consequences would be extremely serious.

Remittances, dependency and Pakistan's wider economy

Just why has this occurred? An important part of the explanation, as I argued in considerable detail some years ago (Ballard 1988, 1989), is that the inhabitants of Mirpur have found themselves locked into Pakistan's wider political economy in a particularly unfortunate way. Besides

[4] It is worth noting that only a very small minority of the beneficiaries of these scams were local Mirpuris. The majority were sophisticated operators based in Lahore and Karachi with extensive political connections, who were therefore able to exploit the gaps in Pakistan's notoriously leaky banking system (whose resources have of course been significantly boosted by the saved remittances of the country's migrants).

lying in the disputed territory of Azad Kashmir, they have found themselves pushed to the very periphery of Pakistan's highly inegalitarian socio-economic order. Hence whilst the authorities in nearby Islamabad have been only too happy to absorb the benefits of the Mangla hydroelectric project as well as the migrants' contribution to the nation's foreign exchange reserves, they have done little or nothing to repair the further damage done to the district's civil infrastructure—which was ill-developed in any event—by the construction of the Mangla Dam. Nor has any international aid come the district's way. Britain's Department for International Development refuses even to consider putting this area on its agenda, informing me, for example, that Mirpuris are 'not poor'.

The result of all this is now plain to see. Given the district's profound infrastructural weaknesses, which local entrepreneurs are clearly not in a position to remedy on their own account, the only real moneymaking enterprises in Mirpur are those which feed off the continuing inflow of remittances. As a result, the local economy has become locked into an ever more tightly constrained condition of dependency. Since virtually all local economic activity is still remittance-driven, it is hardly surprising that most young Mirpuris now take the view that the only meaningful route to prosperity is joining their kinsfolk overseas. Nor is that dream unrealistic: virtually all now await the receipt of an invitation to marry a British-based cousin. As one sagacious farmer told me: 'We Mirpuris don't cultivate crops any more, we just cultivate visas.'

Social contradictions

Clearly, viewed from within, the Mirpuris' apparent prosperity is far more rent by contradictions that most outsiders have yet begun to recognise. In addition to the usual disjunctions of gender, age and social class, two additional sets of contradictions have become salient: first, between those who have and those who have not successfully established themselves in the metropolitan world; and second, between the Anglo-Mirpuris who were born and brought up in British cities such as Birmingham and Bradford, and those Mirpuris who were born and brought up in Mirpur itself. Whilst all such persons may be embedded within transnationally organised *biraderis*, and hence feel strongly bound by their mutual obligations of kinship, the outlook and expectations as well as the interests and concerns of members of each of the many categories precipitated by these cross-cutting contradictions frequently turn out to differ dramatically once they return to Mirpur.

Whether they are emigrants or British-born, all returnees from the UK find that they occupy a position of very considerable privilege on their return to Pakistan. They soon find that their money goes a very long way: a single hour's work in Britain generates at least as much purchasing power as does a full week's hard labour—always assuming that work is available—in Pakistan. Moreover, whilst invariably pleased to find themselves back in their ancestral home, most returnees take it for granted that they have reached a much higher level of social and cultural sophistication than their 'inexperienced' kinsfolk. But however much they may enjoy the adulation which they believe is no more than their due, they are invariably equally disconcerted by the keenness with which everyone seems to be hell-bent on exploiting their beneficence.

From the stay-at-home's point of view, such expectations of generosity are of course entirely legitimate. After all, they reason, it was they who sacrificed their own futures by staying back to hold the fort whilst their kinsfolk went off to enrich themselves overseas. Hence it seems quite reasonable that these well-dressed returnees with their cash-filled wallets should share some of their good fortune. And if returnees fail to live up to these expectations, only one conclusion is possible. They have been so 'spoiled' by their contact with western materialism that they have forgotten the moral imperatives of kinship.

These simmering contradictions become most acute with respect to the returnees' ability to access the highly desirable Entry Certificates which give their holders almost immediate access to the metropolitan world. The route to this is quite straightforward. Since cousin marriage has long been the preferred form of union in Mirpur (just as it is in much of the rest of northern Pakistan), and since the British passport holding offspring of Mirpuri settlers have the right to call their spouses to join them, returnees find themselves under intense pressure to enable another member of their *biraderi* to join them in the metropolis.

In the face of such requests, the instinctive reaction of most returnees who were born and brought up in Mirpur is to make a positive response. Having been socialised in an arena within which it was taken for granted that to assist one's kinsfolk was one's most sacred duty, it follows that marrying one's British-born offspring to a favoured niece or nephew not only fulfils that duty, but generates a substantial debt of gratitude amongst their remaining Mirpur-based kinsfolk. Hence when parents of a British passport holding young person are emigrants in this sense, whether this favour should be granted to a member of the husband's as opposed to

the wife's kindred is often in dispute. By contrast the hopes and expectations of the young people whose fate is thereby being determined are very different. Whilst those who have grown up in Mirpur invariably await the arrival of such offers with keen anticipation, those returning from Britain frequently view their parents' manoeuvres with much trepidation, since little or no attention is normally paid to their own personal interests and concerns.[5]

So it is that whilst most young visitors from Britain welcome the prospect of regaining first-hand contact with the people and places which continue to figure so hugely in their parents' memories and conversation, there are marked gender differentials in the precise character of their experience. In my experience, young men can afford to be more relaxed about any negotiations in which their parents engage, secure in the knowledge that even if a marriage should ensue, there should be no great difficulty in sloughing off their obligations after their return to Britain. By contrast their sisters are acutely aware that fulfilment of their elders' expectations can all too easily leave them entrapped in what amounts to a life sentence.

Nor is it just with respect to marriage that such differences emerge. Whilst local customs and conventions accord men the right to roam freely and do whatever they choose whenever they like, women's spatial mobility is much more tightly constricted. Indeed there are only two legitimate reasons for women to move about: either to visit relatives, or to make a pilgrimage to visit the shrine of a *Pir*. Hardly surprisingly, young women visitors from Britain often find these restrictions extremely irksome. This brings us to a complaint articulated by almost all young returnees from the UK: boredom. Having excitedly explored the nooks and crannies of their new environment during the first few days of their holiday, the novelty very soon wears off. But then what is there to do? Just how much can one bear of granny's tall tales and loving affection? Of endless visits from aunts, uncles and cousins, all of whom expect gifts as well as a visit in return? To be sure TV might offer an alternative to the blur of sameness, but even so familiar programmes often turn out to be missing, the video to have broken down, and the electricity supply to be so intermittent as to be virtually useless. In these circumstances it

[5] Nevertheless it would be erroneous to conclude that such marriages are 'forced'. Even where young people are aware that a union which satisfies their parents' interests and concerns may well be a positive blight on their own, such is the strength of the processes of socialisation as well as the tightness of the networks of reciprocity within which they are enclosed, that they may capitulate, albeit with reservations.

is easy to start chafing at the bit, most especially as it turns out to be much more difficult to slip quietly beyond the elders' gaze. All the classic excuses that one has to go off to college to complete a project or do some revision in the library no longer work.

In these circumstances young men are much better off than their sisters. It is easy enough for them to borrow a motorcycle, or better still a car, in which to speed around impressively; likewise they can roam the *bazaar*, visit friends and relatives, or take a stroll around the Mangla Lake. When that palls they can still go and sit grandly in a restaurant or hotel, ordering endless rounds of tea, Coca-Cola and snacks. And when their patience finally runs out, they can go and pester the travel agent, and tell him to find a seat on the next flight back home. Ricky spoke for many when he told me

> It was a laugh at first. Get up when you like and do what you like—no hassle. But once you've seen it all—and that doesn't take very long—the prats start getting up your nose. They won't leave you alone, they're always pestering me for something or other. All I want to do now is to get back home, and get in a few bevies with me mates. It's dead boring here. I dunno how they put up with it. They're all just a load of wankers.

By no means are all returnees' reactions so negative, of course. However, as far as I have been able to determine, virtually everyone who did not spend a substantial part of their childhood in rural Mirpur—such that they return to a way of life with which they had some previous familiarity—reacts in a similar way. Boredom very soon sets in, since they find little to meaningfully occupy their time and attention. If this is so for free-roaming young men, then the much more serious constraints facing young women returnees leave most of them feeling even more seriously bored, trapped and unhappy—and hence more desperate still to get away.

IV
Conclusion

What lessons can be learned from this complex pattern of developments? Whilst all manner of highly specific contingencies have powerfully conditioned both the processes and the outcomes outlined above, the individual and collective experiences of the inhabitants of Mirpur district are far from unique. Never in human history has such a high proportion of the

world's population been on the move over such long distances than is the case today, and virtually all such movements are driven by just the same imperatives as those described here: a search for a better deal by those otherwise driven to the periphery of an ever more globalised, and ever more unequal, socio-economic order. Whilst the greater part of the current literature on transnational migration focuses on the impact of these flows on receiving societies, where the exponential growth in the size of the non-European presence is currently the cause of much alarm, the impact of these flows on the political economy of sending societies has as yet received much less scholarly attention, though its effects are no less far-reaching.

From that perspective, migratory outflows certainly have their downside. The annual departure of many thousands of the brightest and best of South Asia's newly-qualified scientists, doctors and software engineers to North America is an immense drain on the region's intellectual capital. But such movements also have their upside. To the extent that almost all such migrants remain bound up in trans-local kinship networks, they also generate a substantial capital inflow straight into the pockets of their capital-starved kinsfolk back home. But once the much larger component of the total outflow which is composed of emigrants of peasant origins is factored in, the equation changes: in that case the downside costs are minimal and the potential upside benefits are immense—always supposing that potential can be unlocked. How, then, has Mirpur found itself locked into such a severe—and ultimately unsustainable—condition of dependency, and are there circumstances in which that outcome could have been avoided?

The first lesson to be learned from Mirpur is that a situation which pumps large amounts of capital straight into the pockets of peasant-farmers does not necessarily produce economic development. This is not because 'these illiterate peasants don't know what to do with their money', as helpful bureaucrats in Islamabad repeatedly tell fly-by-night advisors from DfID and the World Bank. The central problem for peasant farmers is that the infrastructural resources which would enable them to invest their capital to radically increase the productivity of their land—such as ready and reliable access to electric power, to turbine driven deep tubewells and the wherewithal to operate them, to road connections to give speedy access to hungry markets in nearby Islamabad, and to a commercial infrastructure to deliver high-value agricultural produce such as fruit and vegetables from farm to marketplace—simply does not exist. In no way is the construction and delivery of such infrastructural

prerequisites something which individual peasant-farmers can hope to provide: only the state can do that. But in the absence of such investment, agriculture will continue to yield negative returns. Why though, should Mirpuris prefer to build skyscrapers instead? Outsiders may view the prestige these constructions bring as wholly ephemeral, but something is clearly better than nothing. If agricultural investment in Mirpur is invariably loss-making, as those who have tried it can testify, why fritter away one's savings on profitless projects in what one might idly assume was the real economy?

Could the outcome be otherwise? The answer is clearly in the affirmative. Much of the land in the area is deep loess, and extremely fertile with appropriate irrigation. Water is readily available, but needs to be pumped to the appropriate locations; a large market lies close by; and there is no shortage of capital in the hands of small farmers. However, the only way in which this potential is ever likely to be released is if the underlying infrastructural problems are resolved. Why, then, have these issues not been addressed?

In the space available it is only possible to highlight a few of the more important answers. First there has been a gross failure by the Pakistani state to invest in the necessary infrastructural resources in rural areas in general (Zaidi 2000), and in Azad Kashmir in particular. Despite the hugely beneficial impact of remittances on Pakistan's balance of payments, Pakistan's urban élite have managed successfully to divert these benefits in their own direction. Likewise, whilst the Mangla hydroelectric project has brought immense benefits to Pakistan proper, the downside costs have overwhelmingly been borne by the inhabitants of Mirpur district (Ballard 1991).

This is not to suggest that Mirpuris are incapable of helping themselves: their very success in breaking through the barriers of fortress Europe makes that absolutely clear. But in unequal and increasingly Hobbesian transnational arenas, those seeking to look after themselves have little alternative but to develop wholly opportunistic entrepreneurial strategies. So, however much affection migrants may have for their Kashmiri homeland—and those skyscrapers and the *kabiristans* beside them clearly underline the depth of that affection—they can hardly be blamed for using all their available resources to manoeuvre their way forward to their own best advantage. Pakistan may eventually come to regret the de-development of high-emigration areas such as Mirpur, just as British politicians wring their hands at the apparent unstoppable inflow from Mirpur. However no one can blame the Mirpuris for pursuing what they

perceive to be their own best interests. They are hardly alone in doing so.

REFERENCES

ADAMS, C. 1987. *Across seven seas and thirteen rivers*. London: THAP Books.

ALLCHIN, B. and R. ALLCHIN. 1982. *The rise of civilisation in India and Pakistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

ATTOCK DISTRICT GAZETTEER. 1907. *Punjab District Gazetteers*, vol. 29. Lahore: Military and Civil Gazette.

BALLARD, R. 1983. Emigration in a wider context: Jullundur and Mirpur compared. *New community* 11, 1: 117–36.

———. 1988. The political economy of migration: Pakistan, Britain and the Middle East. *In* J. Eades, ed., *Migrants, workers, and the social order*, pp. 19–41. London: Tavistock.

———. 1989. Overseas migration and its consequences: The case of Pakistan. *In* H. Alavi and J. Hariss, eds., *The sociology of developing societies: South Asia*, pp. 112–20. London: Macmillan.

———. 1990. Migration and kinship *In* C. Clarke, S. Vertovec and C. Peach, eds, *South Asians overseas: Context and communities*, pp. 219–49. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1991. Kashmir crisis: View from Mirpur. *Economic and political weekly* 26, 9 & 10: 513–17.

———. 1996. The Pakistanis: Stability and introspection. *In* C. Peach, ed., *The ethnic minority populations of Great Britain: Ethnicity in the 1991 Census*, vol. 2, pp. 121–49. London: Central Statistical Office.

———. 1999. Britain's visible minorities: A demographic overview. *At* http://www.art.man.ac.uk/CASAS/pdfpapers/demography.pdf.

———. 2002 The principles and practice of Hawala Banking. *At* http://www.art.man.ac.uk/CASAS/pdfpapers/hawala.pdf.

DAHYA, B. 1974. The nature of Pakistani ethnicity in industrial cities in Britain. *In* A. Cohen, ed., *Urban ethnicity*, pp. 97–125. London: Tavistock.

GILANI, L, FAHIM KHAN and MUNAWAR IQBAL. 1981. *Labour migration from Pakistan to the Middle East*. Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Development Economics.

HOME OFFICE. 2001. *Control of immigration statistics, United Kingdom 2000, command paper 5315*. London: HMSO.

HUSSEIN, A. 2000. *Émigré journeys*. London: Serpent's Tail.

KALRA, V. 2000. *From textile mills to taxi ranks: Experiences of migration, labour and social change* Aldershot: Ashgate.

MODOOD, T. et al. 1997. *Ethnic minorities in Britain: Diversity and disadvantage*. London: Policy Studies Institute.

PLANNING COMMISSION. 1984. *The sixth five year plan*. Islamabad: Govt. of Pakistan.

SAIFULLAH KHAN, V. 1977. The Pakistanis: Mirpuri villagers at home and in Bradford. *In* J. Watson, ed., *Between two cultures: Migrants and minorities in Britain*, pp. 57–89. Oxford: Blackwell.

SHAW, A. 2001. Kinship, cultural preference and immigration. Consanguineous marriage among British Pakistanis. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 7, 2: 315–34.

SMITH, M.P. and L. GUARNIZO, eds. 1998. *Transnationalism from below*. New Brunswick, N.J. Transaction Publishers.

WERBNER, P. 1990. *The migration process: Capital, gifts and offerings amongst British Pakistanis*. Oxford: Berg.

ZAIDI, A. 2000. *Issues in Pakistan's economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

An Essential Reading!

Translation, Text and Theory
The Paradigm of India

Edited by Rukmini Bhaya Nair

This volume re-evaluates the paradigm of translation within the multilingual and cultural context of the Indian subcontinent. Translation is seen by the contributors as a mode of asking questions—difficult, subtle and fundamental questions—about cultural identity. Additionally, they view translations not only as a bridge between languages but between divergent theoretical positions.

Bridging together original contributions from leading practitioners and scholars from diverse disciplines, the volume is divided into five sections.

- Locates translation in its cultural context and explores various factors which define the individual arenas of translators and theorists
- Reflects not only the **perils of translation in history but history as the perils of translation**
- Considers pragmatic issues related to publishing, pedagogy and hermeneutics
- Looks at the way linguistic tools are deployed to reveal the bare bones of grammatical structure
- To the more abstract and philosophical aspects of translation which are generic to the evolution of a more thoughtful multilogue on the discipline of translation

Besides the editor herself, essayists include Sujit Mukherjee, Tejaswini Niranjana, K. Ayyappa Panicker, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Udaya Narayana Singh. Taken together the 18 essays in the volume introduce a large number of thoughtful questions regarding translation in an Indian context and perhaps a few answers.

The Statesman

CONTRIBUTORS: Aditya Behl/*Akshar Bharati*/Vineet Chaitanya/Samantak Das/C.T. Indra/Lachman M. Khubchandani/Amba P. Kulkarni/Jhumpa Lahiri/Ritu Menon/Sujit Mukherjee/Rukmini Bhaya Nair/R. Narasimhan/Tejaswini Niranjana/K. Ayyappa Panicker/G. Umamaheshwar Rao/Krishna Rayan/Rajeev Sangal/Udaya Narayana Singh/Raman Prasad Sinha/Shiv Kumar Srinivasan/Saranindranath Tagore/Vanamala Viswanatha

220 x 140mm/340pages/2002

SAGE Publications
New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

'Save there, eat here': Migrants, households and community identity among Pakhtuns in northern Pakistan

Francis Watkins

The phrase alta gatee, dalta ookhree *(save there, eat here) neatly sums up the way in which Pakhtun migrants understand their own and their families' condition. The aim of this article is to understand some aspects of the culture of labour migration from the Pakhtun village of Kohery to the Gulf states. The analysis presented here draws on fieldwork carried in the village of Kohery in Dir district during 1990–93 and in the United Arab Emirates, based on time spent there in 1988 and 1989. The article examines two interrelated themes: the way in which male migrants saved money, and the ways in which these savings were consumed. The analysis is set against two bodies of ethnographic literature: the ethnographic work on Pakhtuns in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the anthropology of migration and more particularly the slowly growing ethnographic materials on migration from Asia to the Gulf states.*

The 'classical' ethnographies of Pakhtuns or Pashtuns (Ahmed 1980; Barth 1959, 1981; Lindholm 1982; and Tapper 1991) have concentrated in the main on what Bourdieu (1977) terms the 'official' view, that of the dominant and the powerful, focusing on the khans, on household heads and their wives, or on elder brothers. The main interest in these works is on structures, codes of honour and official strategising. There

Francis Watkins is at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Edinburgh, Adam Ferguson Building, George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LL, UK.

Acknowledgements: The research on which this article is based was carried out from 1990 to 1995 and supported by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, the University of Edinburgh and the Charles Wallace Trust. I am particularly grateful to Filippo Osella and Katy Gardner for organising the workshop where an earlier version of this article was presented and for their editorial support through the subsequent rewriting. I am grateful for the comments from the participants in the workshop.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

is, however, a small group of ethnographic work which takes a more dynamic view of Pakhtun society: this includes Anderson (1978, 1982) who looks at the operation of power and dominance and at everyday practices; Grima (1993) who examines women's codes of honour; and Edwards (1990) who focuses on changing identities among Pakhtun Afghan refugees.

It is to this latter type of ethnographic work that this article seeks to contribute. The research in the village of Kohery was amongst a group of poor Pakhtuns, fairly recent arrivals in the area seeking marginal unused land, and servants to the khans in the Dir valley. Further, the research concentrated on a family group of mullahs (clerics), traditionally seen as subordinate among Pakhtuns (Ahmed 1980: 97; Barth 1959: 47). Taking a lead from works such as Abu-Lughod (1986), the research aimed to explore and describe the perspectives of the dominated in Pakhtun society. These households are not independent and autonomous, but dependent upon networks of kin and, contrary to the model, often include younger brothers who seek to break away from their fathers and elder brothers and establish separate households.

Anthropological studies of international migration have contributed an understanding of the ways in which local cultures and social institutions are reproduced across space by migrant and home communities (Gardner 1995: 4–5). Much other research, particularly that with a socio-economic focus, has tended to look for and (over)emphasise the negative effects on households and communities (Appleyard 1988; Stahl 1988). Anthropological studies have brought a more dynamic view which seeks to understand what Gardner calls 'the culture of migration' (Gardner 1995: 10). The small but growing body of ethnographic work on migration to the Gulf states fits into this category, for instance looking at the negotiation of cultural meanings in a context of economic change in Sylhet, Bangladesh (Gardner 1993, 1995); the contribution of migration to social mobility in Kerala, India (Osella and Osella 1999, 2000a, 2000b); the importance of extended families in female migration from Sri Lanka (Gamburd 2000); and the maintenance of kinship ties as an important element of migration from Pakistan (Ballard 2001; Lefebvre 1999; Naveed-i-Rahat 1990).

This article adds to this body of ethnographic work, looking at ways in which resources saved by migrating men are consumed by houses and converted into things of value such as families and kin ties. It also seeks to add a further perspective by examining the way migrating men understand and present the conditions that they live and work in. So far

only the work of Longva (1997) has sought to understand the ways in which migrants in Kuwait are controlled and dominated. In this article, it is argued that the circumstances and lives of migrant men are key elements in understanding the local culture of migration. It therefore includes some elements of what might be described as a 'multi-sited ethnography' (Marcus 1995).

The article opens with a short history of Kohery and of migration from the village by way of background. Three themes are then developed. First, the suffering of male labour migrants and its association with the act of saving 'outside' of the home environment; second, the ways in which houses 'eat' the saved resources, thus transforming them into things of value, namely families and relationships, and the importance of these kin relations to households; and third, the management of desire for goods and money within the village, their association with faith and modernity, and the competition to define the terms of this management of desire. The article concludes by bringing these three themes together, and looking at the way in which a more international understanding of Islam has influenced the culture of migration in Kohery.

I
The village and migration

The history of the families of Kohery gives a sense of their status and of the importance of migration as a means of livelihood for them. The first families moved to the area in search of land for cultivation several generations ago. They belonged to the Utman Khayl from the Bajaur district, a tribal territory neighbouring Dir district—a *khayl* being a patrilineal descent group, described in detail by Barth (1959: 22–30). Some distant kin links are still maintained with the village of origin. The land, though marginal, belonged to the Nawab of Dir, the leader at the time. Cultivation of the land required services to the Nawab, including a proportion of the harvest taken as tax, days of service spent collecting firewood and taking part in hunts and, most importantly, military support to the Nawab. Some families, like those from the Moolian Khayl subsection, provided services such as acting as mullahs to the new village and, in turn, were given *seree* (free) land.

The people of Kohery led a marginal existence on the poor quality, rainfed land of the hillsides. Many had to supplement the meagre returns of their own land with sharecropping for the khans, who controlled the irrigated lands in the valley floor beside the Panjkora river. The khans

provided the land and seed and the sharecropper the labour in return for a mere third of the crop. In addition, a number of villagers sought opportunities outside the immediate area, including sugarcane harvesting and refining in the area of Mardan beyond the Malakand Pass.

Other families sought opportunities further afield. Some of the men from Moolian Khayl, taking advantage of their modest religious education, found work as mullahs in Baluchistan. This work lasted many years and those men who were established there brought their sons and nephews to work with them and receive an education. Still others lived more precarious and adventurous lives as 'holy men', tricking unwary customers into paying for fake 'souvenirs' from Mecca. One man from Kohery is even reputed to have travelled as far as Burma. The stories of the men of Kohery are backed up by other historical enquiries. Both Dichter (1967) and Addleton (1992: 31) mention the migration of Pakhtun men as a result of the uncertain conditions in NWFP.

In the 1950s in newly-independent Pakistan, there were many more opportunities with the development of the irrigation canal system in Punjab and the construction of the new capital of Islamabad. One or two men from Kohery managed to set themselves up as small-scale contractors in this construction work. Once established, they brought in their family and kin to expand their work. In the 1960s many more men travelled to work in Karachi which was then undergoing expansion. Most started in construction and moved on to establish small businesses in transport and tailoring when they had the resources. In some cases the men brought their wives and children to accompany them, though most preferred to keep their families and homes in Kohery.

As Addleton has suggested, the move from Karachi to the Gulf in the 1970s was a natural progression for many Pakistani labourers (Addleton 1992: 39). The pattern for the men of Kohery was much the same as in previous migrations. The first 'pioneers' went to the Gulf as labourers for Pakistani construction firms. Once there, they left these firms and sought to establish themselves independently. The pioneers then formed relationships with local Arab sponsors and began to obtain visas for their male kin. A number of individuals from Kohery are associated with obtaining large numbers of visas for others from the village, either for financial or for other rewards.

The people of Kohery have long recognised their position of dependence. In earlier times they were dependent on the khans and nawabs, while in the 1990s this took the form of dependence on the vagaries of the world labour market. As Roger Ballard also describes for their neighbours

in Mirpur (this volume), those who worked in the Gulf found themselves in a situation where they were treated very much as second-class individuals, as dependents on local Arab sponsors and bosses, and as lesser Muslims. In these situations, then, they used the forms of expression that could be characterised as those of the dependent.

From this more general background. I want to turn to an examination of the ways in which migration and the dependency and ambivalence which it involves is culturally expressed in Kohery, starting with some of the stories I heard during my fieldwork. As we shall see, these act as metaphors for a key theme in the Pakhtun culture of migration: suffering.

II
Suffering and saving men

Azum Khan's story

At one time Azum Khan worked in a remote garden in the mountains behind the town of Hatta in the territory of Oman. The garden was lonely, over twenty minutes' walk away from the next nearest garden. Although Azum was still young, he lived and worked in the garden alone, and in his time there rarely saw anybody else. The work in the garden was easy but the life was hard.

The worst part of working in the garden was the loneliness. For long periods Azum did not see or speak to another living soul. One time, after nine days on his own, another man came past the garden while herding his goats. The man called out his *salaam* but when Azum came to reply no sound would emerge from his mouth. When he tried again he had to cough before he could say anything even in the weakest voice. The man came to ask him if there was anything the matter and when Azum explained why he had been unable to speak, he was upset. He asked Azum if his mother and father were still alive and, if they were, then were they not upset at their son working like this. Azum could only reply that at least it was some kind of work.

After Azum's father, Fazal Hakim, returned to the UAE, one of the first things that he did was to visit his son. When Fazal Hakim saw the place where Azum was working and heard about his hardships, he wept. They agreed that Azum should leave immediately. The next day Azum packed up all that he had—a razor, some scissors, a mirror and some soap—and headed for the village of Muzeirah to see his Arab sponsor.

Azum Khan's story is a particularly good example of the many tales of migration that I was told. Story-telling, that is being able to present individual experiences in the form of compelling and enjoyable tales, was a skill that was valued in Kohery (see also Grima 1993). When I began to ask individual men about their experiences of migration, their responses often took the form of stories about themselves or close relatives. While many of the stories I obtained were told to me during what could be described as interviews, often other men would gather to listen and join in the tale telling, in a similar manner to the gatherings that took place on the return of a migrant to the village.

As I collected sets of stories, a number of patterns emerged. Many of them focused on periods when the men had had to endure particular hardships: an accident, illness, or hard conditions. Another important, recurring theme is that of isolation. In many cases, what made the hardships even more difficult to deal with was the lack of friends and family to help out. Thus, Azum Khan's most poignant tale is of the time he worked alone in a garden; his circumstances alone were enough to reduce his father to tears, and in the telling of the tale he managed to induce similar emotions in his listeners. The sense of isolation emphasises the distance that the men felt from those they knew best and had come to rely on most.

Throughout these tales of hardship, the underlying theme is one of selflessness. Men repeatedly emphasised that they worked abroad not to earn money for themselves, but to save it and send it home to their families. Thus, their aim was not immediate, personal reward, but was rather to endure hardships and struggle for the sake of others. Prayers and poems were used to emphasise the importance of the return of the migrant to his home: for example, a frequently used prayer ended 'Bring all the travellers home in safety, God willing'; one poignant poem dealt with this theme, 'God, don't kill the traveller, their only desire is for their last breath to be at home.'

Benedicta Grima in her book, *The performance of emotion among Paxtun women: The misfortunes which have befallen me* (Grima 1993), develops a similar set of themes. Grima argues that for Pakhtuns there is an important aesthetic and ethic of suffering and hardship. She identifies the aesthetic of grief or sorrow (*gham*) in Islam and in the literature of the area. Using examples from her fieldwork in Swat and Kohat, Grima develops a case for suffering being an ethic for Pakhtun women. She argues that women gain respect and status from being seen to have endured hardships and undergone much suffering. The route to women's honour is through their suffering and their silent endurance of the many

hardships of their harsh lives. Women's suffering is enacted and given voice in certain contexts, the main ones for Grima being the life story and visits of enquiry made during illness (ibid.: 43).

What is most interesting in Grima's work are the similarities in the stories told by women to the tales of migration which men told me. The same emphases are present and the same themes appear: tales of individual suffering and lives of continuous hardship. Grima argues that *gham* is not only the salient expressive form for women but also dominates in the poetic, political, religious, and public discourse of men' (Grima 1993: 159). In Kohery suffering (*gham*) was used to structure and give meaning to the stories told by labour migrants.

The classic work on Pakhtuns (Ahmed 1976, 1980; Barth 1959) describes an honour code for senior, male khans which emphasises independence and aggressively defended autonomy. The people of Kohery were rather the followers and servants of the khans and the Nawab. Others were more humble still, the mullahs and servants of these followers. Abu-Lughod, analysing the Bedouin of Egypt, has argued that while there is the honour code for those who are independent, for dependents, including women, junior men and servants, there is a separate code of modesty (Abu-Lughod 1986: 79). In this modesty code, the route to honour is through voluntary submission to those who have the resources to be independent (ibid.: 104).

In a similar way, the men of Kohery, who cannot present themselves as independent and autonomous, use another code of honour. They present themselves as having endured hardships and suffered in much the same ways as Grima describes for Pakhtun women. The tales of the 'selfless migrants' played on the important twin themes. Like the women whose stories Grima relates, the men of Kohery made much of the fact that they had suffered not for themselves, but for others. The stories that I was told related their experiences in form that defined those telling them as 'worthy' individuals and as dependent, but nevertheless honourable, poor Pakhtuns.

This contrasts with other more heroic views of male Gulf migrants, such as the *gulfan* in Kerala (Osella and Osella 2000a: 122–24), or the cosmopolitan Filipino migrant (Margold 1995: 292). The tales told by male migrants from Kohery more closely resemble some of the stories of hard work, confinement and punishment that Sri Lankan housemaids told to emphasise their own honour and chastity (Gamburd 2000: 222–29).

As important as the notion of honourable suffering was the need to separate the act of saving from that of spending. A proverb encapsulates this separation: *alta gatee, dalta ookhree*, translated as: 'save there, eat here'. The act of saving carried out by individual men was, then, separated conceptually from the act of consumption. The position taken was that the only place that money could effectively be saved was 'there', away from the house and the village in the distant 'outside' of the Gulf. In this other, 'outside' environment, the rules of acceptable behaviour changed. In this world of work there was a different kind of sociality where consumption was kept to a minimum and men's lives were extremely frugal, for their real attention was focused on their homes. Once the money was returned to the social world for consumption in the village, however, a different set of values took over. In the village the spending of remittance money was not an individual activity but one that was organised by social groups, in particular the household. It is to these that I now wish to turn. As we shall see in what follows, the stories of male migrants are linked to the ways in which households and the village were discussed. Men suffered for a reason, the discourse went, out of selfless devotion to their families. Hardship was, therefore, part of the process of accumulating savings, which was presented in stark contrast to houses 'eating', a commonly used metaphor for potentially productive consumption.

III
The economy of households

Parry and Bloch, reflecting on the symbolic representation of money and the morality of exchange, suggest that there is a general pattern to be found in the totality of exchanges in various cultures (Parry and Bloch 1989: 1). Goods which are acquired in the short-term are converted into the long-term, social and cosmic order by an array of processes, described in various contexts as 'drinking', 'cooking' and 'digesting' (ibid.: 25). The people of Kohery articulated many of the same concerns and theories as those suggested by Parry and Bloch. The world for them was very clearly divided into the 'here' of the village and the 'there' of the work environment. In this different social world of work, men could safely engage in the individual, acquisitive transactions associated with wage labour. The resources obtained 'there' were brought back home and were converted by being 'eaten' into the long-term cycle of reproduction of households. To further understand this, let us start with a quote:

> If you have a pocket full of money and you are hungry, then what good is it? If you save all of your money and don't build a house for your children, then it is no good. It is better to have a full stomach and a new house for your children and have no money.
>
> In Kohery people say, why save money when you can spend it now on your family? What is the point of having a pocket full of money when your children are hungry? It is better to buy food for them. When you have saved a lot of money it is better to build a new house for your children and your mother and father. If you spend all the money today then you can always go out tomorrow to earn some more.

This comes from one of Azum Khan's cousins, Wahid Gul, and encapsulates some of the ideas behind the ways in which houses are said to 'eat' resources. Here, houses 'eat' all of the savings made 'outside'. This act of 'eating' transforms savings into something valuable, in this case houses and families.

At the time of fieldwork, in the early 1990s, most households in Kohery had at least one male member working in the Gulf states, most commonly the UAE or Saudi Arabia. While almost all households continued to cultivate their land, this produced only a very small part of the annual needs of the family, in the majority of cases three to four months of grain for making bread. In the main, the everyday consumption of households (food, clothing, cooking fuel, etc.) was funded by remittance money sent back by men from the Gulf. In most cases growing families at home took up virtually all of the money that the men were able to save.

Nevertheless, most families struggled to put by any extra savings. What they had were usually used first to improve and reconstruct the houses, building in breeze blocks and concrete, with as many modern conveniences, such as toilets, as could be afforded. The most significant difference between households in Kohery was between those that had old-style houses of stone, wood and earth, and those with newly constructed houses. There were fewer and fewer of the former left occupied in the village, and every summer saw a new wave of construction as the migrants returned with their savings. Inside houses, there was little difference in the contents, though the decoration was a matter of individual taste. Most rooms in the house had ceiling fans and cassette players, most houses had a television set. The limited and unpredictable power supply meant that refrigerators were a matter of choice and air-conditioning was a non-starter. Again, some houses had small gas cookers, though many preferred to use the more reliable supplies of firewood for cooking.

Most households in Kohery were in a very similar economic situation. Many had been poor to start with, few had substantial landholdings in the village where cultivatable land was limited, and virtually all the land was marginal. By the 1970s, any spare land in the immediate area had been purchased. There were few other, viable business opportunities in Kohery or the nearest town of Timirgara. There were a number of general stores, a few tailors and a larger number of pick-ups for the transport of people and goods operating in the village. In general most of these small businesses were supported by remittance money. Other businesses in Timirgara, such as construction supplies and travel agencies, operated mainly because of the availability of remittance money (see Ballard 2001 for a similar situation in Kashmir). Overall there was a striking homogeneity in the appearance of people and houses in Kohery. This was in part due to the similar economic circumstances of the households, in part due to the relatively limited opportunities for conspicuous consumption by households.

Most houses in Kohery were described using the term *khrooskoo*, which roughly translates as 'we eat and drink'. *Khrooskoo* households, it was argued, used up all of the resources that they received immediately, however much money was sent back. They were, as a result, almost completely dependent on labour migration and remittance money. In Kohery, relatively little emphasis was placed on the differences between households in the village, while the similarities of their dependent status were highlighted. All houses were described and would describe themselves as being *khrooskoo* and, at the same time, they were also in a sense expected to be in that situation.

The *khrooskoo* household had a range of both negative and positive connotations. The idea of the *khrooskoo* household encapsulated and highlighted the dangers that the people of Kohery faced: all households were dependent on a single source of income and had no other resources to fall back upon, and, unable to effectively support themselves from local resources, they were forced to expose themselves to risk by taking part in international labour migration; and having to depend on labour migration meant that men, along with their families, had to suffer prolonged separations over many years.

On the positive side, as the quote indicates, households, by consuming the resources brought into them, were able to recreate things of value—that is, families and relationships. The spending of the money by a *khrooskoo* household was characterised as falling into a recognisable pattern: in the first two years all of the money would go into supporting

the household and building a new house; when the sons and daughters of the household began to grow up, there then came the costs of weddings which again used up years of savings; as the sons married and the household grew, it cost more and more to support, and so ate increasingly more resources. In this pattern can be seen the importance given to families and to the vital wider relationships which in turn supported families. Homes were, therefore, an important pivot of meaning for migrant men, and investments in houses were a focus of real pride. The appearance of these houses, and of the village as a whole, was put forward as demonstrating their dedication to their families and homes.

After house construction, the other major investment which households saved for was marriages. The sums spent on marriage goods and the wedding itself were often considerable and the scale of the celebrations required the assistance of all of the household's kin. The amounts spent reflected the importance that establishing and maintaining close kin links had for households. The importance of patrilineal kin to Pakhtuns is recorded by Barth (1959), Ahmed (1980) and Tapper (1991). In Kohery marriages were used either to reinforce these agnatic ties through parallel-cousin marriage, or to establish strategic new affinal ties.

On a day-to-day basis, both men and women participated in the maintenance of agnatic and affinal relationships with constant visits and gift giving. Men returning from the Gulf on leave brought with them cases full of gifts and spent their first few days at home visiting various kin to pass on these gifts and messages from those whom they had left behind. Other regular visits took place on occasions such as the illness of a household member, the birth of a new child, and religious holidays (see Grima 1993: 43 and 58 on visiting and gift giving). This regular visiting and its reciprocation reinforced complex webs of inter-household dependency. As was frequently pointed out in the village, no single household could participate in migration or survive in the long-term without the aid of this network.

Those groups of kin with whom families interacted regularly were called *khpulwan*, which roughly translates as 'our own', and were essential for everyday life, providing support, loans and friendship. In the case of migration, the support of kin was particularly important. The initial costs of visas and travel were high and most households had to rely on loans and support from their kin at the outset. In many cases in Kohery, individuals already established in the Gulf obtained the work visa and expected repayment only after the new migrant had established himself. Those travelling to and from home carried with them saved money, letters

and messages, and many gifts. At home as well, kin provided vital support for potentially vulnerable families, giving protection, extending loans and credit, and assisting in the cultivation of land.

IV
People in Kohery have God: The management of desire

> In the village of Banda people save most of their money in the bank. They like money and are worried that if they spend it now then there will be no more later. They are afraid to buy vehicles because there are so many enemies who would set fire to them. They are afraid to build new houses because it would use up all of their money.
>
> People in Kohery have God and know that if they spend all of their money today then if they need money tomorrow they would be able to get it. They prefer to spend their money now and make their children, their mothers and fathers happy.
>
> Until recently the people in the village of Safaray were the same as in Banda, they saved all of their money in the bank and were afraid to spend it. In the last three years they have become intelligent. They have realised that it is much better to spend the money than save it.

This quotation, taken from a series of conversations with Wahid Gul and others, compares Kohery with the neighbouring villages of Banda and Safaray. Such comparisons were frequent, both within Kohery and between the village and other places outside. The comparisons were part of the continuous public evaluation and judgement of the ways in which others spent money, and give an idea of the moral evaluation being made. These judgements could be said to be ways of socially managing desire. The village as a whole found ways of establishing rules of consumption, deciding what counted as acceptable expenditure and what unacceptable. Consumption of an acceptable kind could, therefore, be seen as socially constructive.

Two closely linked descriptions, the *khrooskoo* house and the spendthrift, *sakhee*, help to set the boundaries of acceptable forms of consumption. One man, describing why *khrooskoo* houses are good, said, 'What are you going to do with the money if you die tomorrow? For a rich person, on judgment-day, there will be a lot to be judged.' As this implies, too great an interest in money was seen as being a bad thing. The talk of

money was in 'easy come, easy go' terms, demonstrating a lack of interest in the thing for its own sake. The rhetoric was of continuous, uncontrolled spending; as people said: 'If we need more then God will provide'. In similar terms a *sakhee* was described as a person who gives money away freely to others as charity, who lends money to those who ask, and buys things for those in his own household without stopping to calculate or to worry about his own future needs. Because he uses his money to benefit others and not himself, it is thought that, however much he gives away, when he himself needs money it will come to him. The emphasis, then, was on a demonstrated disinterest in money for its own sake and the utilisation of money for the sake of others, both showing a trust in God.

When I tried to ask questions about the expenditure of individual households, people were confusingly vague. This initially surprised me as much of the everyday conversation revolved around prices and amounts of money sent home from the Gulf. However, when it came to what they spent at home, people were either unwilling or unable to make even rough estimates. The common theme was that the spending of money by individuals and households could be described as uncalculated and uncontrolled. This was a way of deliberately marking a lack of interest in the accumulation of money.

While spending was carefully uncontrolled, what the money was spent on was equally carefully controlled. The emphasis on a lack of control over resources was the same throughout the community; everybody claimed to have spent all that they had. At the same time, there were only certain areas where large amounts of money could be acceptably spent; food, housing and weddings being the main ones. Expenditure in these areas was expected and encouraged. But equally, to spend too much on the wrong things was something that was discouraged and even condemned. The realms of taste and the limits of consumerism were decided by the group. People who took too eagerly to the newly available consumer world were restrained by the condemnatory comments of others in the community.

Those who did show too great an interest in money were likely to be ridiculed and labelled as misers. The most obvious was the contrast drawn between the miser and the spendthrift. The worst term for miser was *kanjoos*, which had the negative connotations of one who loved money for its own sake. Another word used for miser was *shoom*, which literally means a sip or a small amount, and has both good and bad connotations. At its worst, to call somebody a *shoom* was to imply that they had too

great an interest in money. On the positive side, a *shoom* is a person who is careful with money, who saves it for a rainy day. The evaluation, good or bad, depended very much on the intentions of the person; whether the person was interested only in money for its own sake, or was interested in money to help his family. The word for greed, *hayras*, could also be used as a term of abuse. Grima, in her analysis of Pukhtu emotion concepts, singles greed out as a particularly harmful term (Grima 1993: 35). The real damage of greed comes from a lack of concern for others or too great an interest in money or things. Thus, a person who is miserly out of concern for others is acceptable and even amusing. On the other hand, those who are greedy or miserly out of love for money in itself, are to be condemned as potentially dangerous.

Such comments and judgements draw attention to two types of 'deviant' behaviour: not spending money at all, and spending money on the wrong things. When it came to not spending money, there were two models of behaviour, one deviant and one ideal: the miser or greedy person who ignored their social responsibilities in the interests of money; and the spendthrift who ignored money in the interests of their social responsibilities. Judgements about individuals were, in effect, an effort towards the management of desires. The safe limits of desire for money and material goods were defined through these judgements, with the emphasis on the overarching importance of social relations.

Parry and Bloch make similar comments about the separate spheres of transactions when they say:

> there is always the opposite possibility—and this evokes the strongest censure—the possibility that individual involvement in the short-term cycle will become an end in itself which is no longer subordinated to the reproduction of the larger cycle; or, more horrifying still, that grasping individuals will divert the resources of the long-term cycle for their own short-term transactions (Parry and Bloch 1989: 26–27).

In Kohery, the main area of concern was the corrupting potential of money on the individual. Thus, to accuse another of greed was a strong form of condemnation and the title 'miser' a severe censure. To be greedy was to divert funds away from the social and towards one's own ends. To be a miser was to make the acquisition and saving of money an end in itself. The problem of money was that it diverted the attention of the individual away from social ties and responsibilities, away from the role of providing for the social group and continuing the long-term cycle.

Khrooskoo could similarly be seen as a description that played down the obvious differences between households and emphasised the similarities among them. It was a description that suggested that there were no real differences between households. At the same time this emphasis on similarities proposed that all households *should* behave in a similar way. It was a moral ideal that was in some ways a blueprint for the successful and religious household. It could, therefore, be seen as a means of creating a collective identity.

In Kohery all households were involved in or were dependent in some way on migration so that they were in a similar position. That is not to say that there were no significant differences in the economic positions of households. Those who had substantial landholdings were in a much better position to use their remittances to develop new enterprises, though most of these enterprises were dependent on continued migration (see Ballard 2001 and this volume for a similar situation). Those with little land were wholly dependent on their remittances. Nevertheless, all households in Kohery were to a greater or lesser extent dependent on migration. In addition, people in Kohery deliberately played down the differences between households and emphasised the similarities.

Stirrat, in his description of a fishing community in Sri Lanka, looks at styles of consumption. In this context the problem with consumption was that 'on the one hand it creates collective identities ... and on the other it creates isolation, particularism and competition between what are so often seen as the "natural units" of society' (Stirrat 1989: 108). The solution is to be found in similar living conditions and a shared lifestyle which were regarded as part of the community identity. Indeed, 'To live differently was essentially to say that one wasn't really a fisherman but was trying to be something else' (ibid.: 103). The latter effects were something that those in Kohery tried to play down by emphasising the similarities of their circumstances. As in the case described by Stirrat, it could be said that in Kohery, to live differently was essentially to say that one was not part of the community. There people used the examples of the miser and the spendthrift to demonstrate the point that to live differently was to break effective relations with kin and neighbours.

Gell, looking at the Muria Gonds, suggests ways in which this basic ambiguity of consumption can be solved (Gell 1986). The financial circumstances of the Muria Gonds have improved dramatically over the last decades and their new wealth has given them the opportunity to engage in consumerism for the first time. However, even among the wealthiest families, consumption is severely restrained and there is little

competition between individuals or households. In the Muria understanding, collective identity is paramount so that consumption in subsumed to the need to display commitment to the village. Items for consumption are singled out and incorporated into a collective style, to which all Muria try to approximate as best they can (ibid.: 122–23). Consumption, then, is not associated with competition; rather, the emphasis is on collective style. As Gell puts it, 'The Muria are dedicated followers of fashion, followers being the operative word' (ibid.: 123). Where existing notions define what should be purchased and how these items should be used and displayed, the process of consumerism becomes a creative rather than a destructive one.

In similar ways to those described by Gell for the Muria Gonds, the people of Kohery emphasised a collective style of consumption. Consumption and discourses of spending were used to create a collective identity. The emphasis was on the fact that all houses were dependent on migration, were *khrooskoo*. Such an emphasis brought out the similarities between households and highlighted their interdependence. The contrasts made were with neighbouring communities to emphasise that Kohery's style of consumption was the correct one.

The appearance of the community was seen as an expression of the behaviour of the members of that community and their beliefs. The new houses of Kohery, the well-kept mosques and many businesses and vehicles were a testimony not only to the strong sense of community, but to the fact that the people valued social relations over money. The poor houses of the neighbouring village of Banda, the single, run-down mosque and the absence of vehicles and businesses were taken as outward signs of the fact that people were interested in money for its own sake, which resulted in jealousies and the breakdown of the community. Safaray, another neighbour, was on the road to reform. Previously the people, like those in Banda, had been interested in money for its own sake. They had, however, changed their attitudes, and the rapid improvements in the appearance of their community were seen as an expression of this.

In Kohery the examples of the miser and the spendthrift were used to demonstrate the point that to live differently was to break effective relations with kin and neighbours. Competition was seen as less between households and more between communities. Thus, people played down the differences between households within the community on all levels of consumption and emphasised the differences between communities in styles of consumption. The people of Kohery sought to outspend their

neighbours in Banda and Safaray, the better to emphasise their own correct attitudes to money, and their own trust in God.

V
Competition and conspicuous consumption

This is not to say that there was no competition and conflict within and between households in Kohery. Indeed, much of my research and the information collected revolved around the tensions within households and the conflicts within the village. However, the forms of conspicuous consumption were also subject to incorporation into a collective style. The competition was less over spending and scale and more over the definitions of this collective style. Here I take one example of a form of conspicuous consumption in order to illustrate these competitions over meaning.

In the summer months, when many men returned from the Gulf to take six months of leave, the two major events in the social calendar were weddings and religious feasts, the latter known as *kheyrats*. *Kheyrats* were large and costly events, as large in scale and organisation as most weddings in the village, and only those who had the resources could afford to lay on such a feast. They were held on various occasions, the most important ones being death anniversaries, the circumcision of a son, and the return of an individual from Haj. They were held, not in the name of those who paid for them, but were described to me as feasts 'given in the name of God', as thanks.

The form of the *kheyrat* was of overarching importance; there was a constant concern in the village that the feasts should all follow the same formula. The hosts provided food, usually rice and buffalo meat, and had to ensure that all who came received a sufficient amount. An important aspect of *kheyrats* was that all who came were treated equally; the guests sat and were served together to be fed the same in quantity and quality. The emphasis for the givers was on these feasts as charitable events, and many villagers sent their children to eat their fill and collect food to bring home. The formulaic nature of the feasts further emphasised their role as charitable, even ritualistic, events rather than conspicuous displays and celebrations.

As one of the Five Pillars of Islam, donations to the needy and to the community generally were seen as an important aspect of life in Kohery. People took pride in the fact that the less well-off households, headed by widows and older childless couples, were well cared for by their

neighbours. The existence of many neighbourhood mosques and the good condition of the main village mosque were seen as representing the generosity of the village households. In addition, the wealthiest families made generous donations to the construction and upkeep of mosques and religious schools, the *madrassas*. In most cases these donations were made privately, often to institutions in neighbouring villages, as a means of demonstrating the donors' genuine generosity. Nevertheless, information about these donations, their frequency and the exact amounts, was public knowledge. *Kheyrats* were seen in this context as the purest form of public charitable event. Many in the village saw these public forms of charity as necessary for those with wealth to cleanse it, to render it acceptable.

The importance of these charitable donations and acts had changed over time and under the influences of certain individuals in Kohery. Over a period of ten to fifteen years, the village council had sought to change the ways in which all major events in the village were celebrated. They ruled that weddings in particular should be shorter and more sombre affairs. In general they were successful, although they continued to be a source of conflict in Kohery, with constant arguments over innovative practices. (Here, interesting comparisons can be made with Osella and Osella, this volume.) Over the same time span *kheyrats* came to play a more important role in the village and grew in significance. One charismatic village elder was said to have taken the lead in bringing in these changes. His mantle was taken on by a member of Moolian Khayl who worked for most of the time as a mullah in a mosque in the UAE. On his annual visits to the village, and through his supporters, he played an important role in influencing the ways in which major events were held as well as the decisions of the council.

In seeking such changes, these leaders drew on both Pakhtun 'traditions' and on the rise of Islamic 'traditionalism' or 'fundamentalism' in Pakistan, and particularly in the areas around Dir in NWFP. Anderson (1978) looks in detail at the role and position of traditional leaders, or khans, among the Ghilzai Pakhtuns of Afghanistan. He suggests that khans are economic and political big men who gain and maintain their position in society through being able to 'feed the people' (ibid.: 169). This notion of 'feeding' people' means that those with the means are able to convert their own agricultural surplus into social relations through hospitality, employment and other forms of patronage (ibid.: 169). Anderson sums up by arguing that 'Khans, in short, traffic in patronage and

respect, service and influence, joining personal charisma to collective legitimacy in all their procedures and ambiguities' (ibid.: 170).

The *kheyrat*, then, can be seen as conspicuous consumption which draws on such traditional frameworks of behaviour. The powerful man is the generous man, the man who can afford to turn his surplus to 'feeding the people'. At the same time, this traditional concept of generosity is being subverted: the *kheyrat* is given not to gain immediate personal power but as a demonstration of true generosity, as a demonstration of faith. Here, the competition is not over groups of followers, but over the cultural values of Kohery. Banerjee describes the similar use of the Pakhtun code of honour, *Pukhtunwali*, by the non-violent movement against British colonialism in the NWFP in the 1930s and 1940s (Banerjee 2000: 154–61). She argues that the code is not static, but is rather 'the subject of negotiation and innovation' (ibid.: 15). In a similar vein, I would argue that the development of the *kheyrat* in Kohery draws on established Pakhtun notions of generosity and power.

However, patterns of power and influence among Pakhtuns have changed considerably over time. Evidence of this is demonstrated in Edwards' (1990) examination of changes in Ghilzai Pakhtun identity among Afghan refugees in Pakistan, which analyses their adaptation to their new position of political marginality. In Pakhtun society, in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, mullahs have traditionally had a subordinate position (Edwards 1990: 91; see also Ahmed 1980 and Barth 1959). However, religious leaders have attained new status and authority among Afghan refugees due to their positions of power in the resistance parties (Edwards 1990: 93). As Edwards argues, 'Islam has assumed a more vital role as a focus for communal identification' (ibid.: 94). He goes on to conclude that 'an increasing dichotomization has come about between those who uphold tribal patterns and those who profess primary allegiance to Islam as a practical code of social behaviour' (ibid.: 97).

This process of change has not been confined to Afghan refugee camps but has been widespread in Pakistan and particularly important in NWFP. The changed role of Islam in Pakistani society has been driven by the development of organisations such as the Tablighi Jamaat and of political parties such as Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan (see Ahmad 1991). It has also been argued that international migration has played a role in this heightening of Islamic awareness (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990: 5) and in the creation of an international version of Islam (Gardner 1995: 242). In Kohery the dichotomy described by Edwards was evident between those who were overtly political and called on ideas of Pakhtun 'tradition',

and those who saw themselves as more religious. Over time the religious faction in the village had been able to gain more influence, in a cleansing of 'tradition' more in line with new Islamic ideals—for instance, in the style of weddings and the development of the *kheyrat*.

In understanding *kheyrat*, Appadurai's concept of tournaments of value, conceived of as status contests between those who hold power in society (1986: 21), is useful. In these contests, the actors seek to redefine the cultural value of items and tokens to their own advantage. The contestants, through their strategic skills in diverting or subverting the 'culturally conventionalized paths for the flow of things' (ibid.), attempt to win status, rank, fame, or reputation. To develop Appadurai's concept, *kheyrats* could be described as tournaments of charitable generosity. This was a way of channelling conspicuous consumption into 'acceptable forms'. Thus in Gell's terms, the competitive uses of excess wealth were also incorporated into the collective style (Gell 1986: 122–23). The conflict was over cultural meanings and who was able to control them. Those who took part in these contests were attempting to establish the limits of conspicuous consumption in Kohery, and at the same time establish themselves as figures of influence and power.

VI
Conclusions

In this article I have argued that male migrants present themselves as suffering men of faith, working for their families 'outside' in the world of labour migration. *Khrooskoo* households are seen as the norm, 'eating' resources saved 'outside' and converting them into valuable families and relationships. Further, the desire to consume is managed within the village in a way that allows the members to project themselves as representing a faithful village. Competition within the village exists over the definition of these cultural values.

The literature on Gulf migration from South Asia shows a variety of responses and effects on local patterns of consumption and competition. Gardner (1995), for example, argues that in Syhlet involvement in international migration had led to increased economic and social differentiation. Those who had access to the resource of migration were able to transform their economic circumstances, thus setting them apart from those who did not have such access (ibid.: 271). Osella and Osella make a similar case for Gulf migration in Kerala which has accelerated processes of social change and differentiation in which those groups who

are already well-established have managed to maintain and even increase their economic and social advantage (Osella and Osella 2000b: 79, 249). Again, Lefebvre, describing the situation in two villages in Punjab, Pakistan, concludes that migration to the Gulf has led to greater economic differentiation and, as a result, to social tensions (Lefebvre 1999: 211–14).

The situation in Kohery, however, is closer to that described by Gamburd (2000) in Sri Lanka. The emphasis in her analysis is on the ways in which migration has strengthened extended family relationships, and the resulting family obligations have brought about a redistribution of resources from migration (ibid.: 237). In Kohery, too, households actively developed and maintained relationships with a range of kin, who served as a system of support necessary to enable migration. The way in which this was described was the conversion of saved money through eating into things of value, namely, families and kin groups.

This also contrasts with some of the literature on Pakhtuns, with an emphasis on male autonomy (Barth 1981: 106) and household independence (Ahmed 1980: 96; Tapper 1991: 102). This is not an option open to the Pakhtuns of Kohery. Instead they emphasise something similar to the modesty code of the weak and dependent described by Abu-Lughod (1986: 79). Thus the migrating men of Kohery portray themselves as suffering on account of their dedication to their families back home, in much the same way as Grima's (1993) description of Pakhtun women. Their pride and honour comes from this dedication to their families, and the pride and honour of the village of Kohery comes from what they see as the demonstrated faith and trust in God.

As Banerjee has argued, the Pakhtun code of honour is a cultural framework which is 'the subject of negotiation and innovation' (Banerjee 2000: 15). In this article I have examined some of the ways in which local innovation and negotiation take place. Religious feasts and weddings have been used as the sites for tournaments of value of Kohery, where influential leaders have attempted to redefine their cultural meanings. These contests draw on 'traditional' Pakhtun notions of generosity and leadership, which are emphasised in writings such as those of Barth (1959: 77) and Anderson (1978: 169–70). The key innovation in these contests is the attempt by those who seek influence to redefine these 'traditions' within a wider framework of Islamic revival, similar to the contesting of local Islam described by Gardner (1995: 243–44). The aim of the religious elements in these contests is both to purify the Pakhtun 'traditions' and at the same time to further build a position of influence in the village.

REFERENCES

ABU-LUGHOD, L. 1986. *Veiled sentiments: Honor and poetry in a Bedouin society*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

ADDLETON, J. 1992. *Undermining the centre: The Gulf migration and Pakistan*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.

AHMAD, M. 1991. Islamic fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat. *In* M.E. Marty and R.S. Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms observed, the fundamentalism project*, vol. 1, pp. 457–530 Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

AHMED, A.S. 1976. *Millennium and charisma among Pathans: A critical essay in social anthropology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

———. 1980. *Pukhtun economy and society: Traditional structure and economic development in a tribal society*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

ANDERSON, J.W. 1978. There are no khans any more: Economic development and social change in Afghanistan. *Middle east journal* 32, 2: 167–83.

———. 1982. Social structure and the veil: Comportment and the composition of interaction in Afghanistan. *Anthropos* 77, 2: 397–420.

APPADURAI, A., ed. 1986. *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.

APPLEYARD, R.T., ed. 1988. *International migration today. Vol 1: Trends and prospects*. Paris: UNESCO.

BALLARD, R. 2001. The impact of kinship on the economic dynamics of transnational networks: Reflections on some South Asian developments. *Transnational Communities Programme Working Paper Series*. URL: http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working %20papers/Ballard.pdf

BANERJEE, M. 2000. *The Pathan unarmed: Opposition and memory in the North West Frontier*. Oxford: James Currey.

BARTH, F. 1959. *Political leadership among Swat Pathans*. London: Athlone Press

———. 1981. *Features of person and society in Swat*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

BOURDIEU, P 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DICHTER, D. 1967. *The North West Frontier of West Pakistan*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.

EDWARDS, D.B. 1990. Frontiers, boundaries and frames: The marginal identity of Afghan refugees. *In* A.S. AHMED, ed., *Pakistan: The social sciences perspective*, pp. 61–99. Karachi: Oxford University Press.

EICKELMAN, D. and J. PISCATORI. 1990. Social theory in the study of Muslim societies. *In* D. Eickelman, and J. Piscatori, eds., *Muslim travellers: Pilgrimage, migration and the religious imagination*, pp. 3–25. London: Routledge.

GAMBURD, M.R. 2000. *The kitchen spoon's handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's migrant housemaids*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

GARDNER, K. 1993. Desh-bidesh: Sylheti images of home and away. *Man* 28, 1: 1–15.

———. 1995. *Global migrants, local lives: Travels and transformation in rural Bangladesh*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

GELL, A. 1986. Newcomers to the world of goods: Consumption among the Muria Gonds. *In* A. Appadurai, ed., *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, pp. 110–40. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

GRIMA, B. 1993. *The performance of emotion among Paxtun women: The misfortunes which have befallen me*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.

LEFEBVRE, A. 1999. *Kinship, honour and money in rural Pakistan: Subsistence economy and the effects of international migration*. London: Curzon.

LINDHOLM, C. 1982. *Generosity and jealousy: The Swat Pukhtun of Northern Pakistan*. New York: Columbia University Press.

LONGVA, A.N. 1997. *Walls built on sand: Migration, exclusion and society in Kuwait*. Boulder, Co.: Westview Press.

MARCUS, G. 1995. Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual review of anthropology* 24: 95–117.

MARGOLD, J.A. 1995 Narratives of masculinity and transnational migration: Filipino workers in the Middle East. *In* A. Ong and M.G. Peletz, eds., *Bewitching women, pious men: Gender and body politics in Southeast Asia*, pp. 274–98. Berkeley: University of California Press.

NAVEED-I-RAHAT. 1990. *Male outmigration and matri-weighted household*. Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation.

OSELLA, F. and C OSELLA. 1999. From transience to immanence: Consumption, life cycle and social mobility in Kerala, south India. *Modern Asian studies* 33, 4: 989–1020.

———. 2000a Migration, money and masculinity in Kerala. *The journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, 1: 117–33.

——— 2000b. *Social mobility in Kerala: Modernity and identity in conflict*. London: Pluto Press.

PARRY, J.P. and M BLOCH, eds. 1989. *Money and the morality of exchange*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

STAHL, C., ed. 1988. *International migration today. Vol. 2: Emerging issues*. Paris: UNESCO.

STIRRAT, R.L. 1989. Money, men and women. *In* J.P. Parry and M. Bloch, eds., *Money and the morality of exchange*, pp. 94–116. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

TAPPER, N. 1991 *Bartered brides: Politics, gender and marriage in an Afghan tribal society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A Biannual Journal from SAGE India

Studies in History

(New Series)

Editors:
Muzaffar Alam, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India
Neeladri Bhattacharya, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India
Kumkum Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Studies in History reflects the considerable expansion and diversification that has occurred in historical research in India in recent years. The old preoccupation with political history has been integrated into a broader framework which places equal emphasis on social, economic and cultural history. *Studies in History* examines regional problems and focuses attention on some of the neglected periods of India's past. The journal also publishes articles concerning countries other than India. It provides a forum for articles on the writing of different varieties of history, and contributions challenging received wisdom on long-standing issues. The journal is a repository for discussions on new sources of historical information and problems of acquiring research material. From time to time, it devotes special issues to specific themes of interest. Its regular features include review essays and book reviews that keep you in touch with the latest literature in the field.

Frequency
Biannual (February, August)

For subscription information contact the office near you:
Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, B-42 Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi 110 017, India or email at journalsubs@indiasage.com.

Sage Publications Ltd, 6 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PU, UK or email at subscription@sagepub.co.uk.

Sage Publications Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320, USA or email at order@sagepub.com.

SAGE Publications
New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

long-distance travel (Gardner 1993a). Similarly, this article examines connections between the exchange of gifts, ideas and social practices among Sunni Muslim ship owners, sailors and their kin as they return with the monsoon from the ports of the Persian Gulf. Drawing on biographical approaches to 'individuals' (Mines 1988) and to the 'commodities' they transact (Appadurai 2000), I attempt to highlight a career of migration and travel from within a long-term view of population exchange in the western Indian Ocean region. My aim is to explore the ways in which the effects of long-term historical migrations have ordered local social hierarchy and how a similar 'modern'-order, attached to commodities and religion, is deployed in an attempt to overturn 'traditional' social hierarchy. This 'demonstrates', in ethnographic terms, 'the' relationship between what Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry call a 'cycle of short-term exchange' and 'a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order' (1995: 2). They show that the acquisitive short-term cycle can positively contribute to the long-term cycle; or, freed from the constraints of the long-term cycle, it may become an end in itself; or avaricious individuals will use the critical resources of the long-term cycle for their own short-term transactions (ibid.: 16–17). Rather than treating this relationship as symbiotic or as mutually constituting, the ethnography presented here shows how this relationship can be paradoxical and conflicting, and how short-term exchanges can be designed to transform the social and cosmic order, in this case as Islamic reform.

I use the term '*re*form' literally, not only to avoid the obvious problems associated with 'orthodoxy', 'fundamentalism' and so on, but also to stress that neither the illusory start nor end points of this process are generic, varying considerably in their composition across time and space.

Movements reinterpreting Islamic practices have long been identified as a reaction to political inequality, ranging in scale from colonial encounters (Geertz 1968) to competition with other religious groups (Benson 1983), as well as being a form of status competition between Muslims themselves (Mines 1975). The anthropological tradition that has developed around the study of Muslim society has drawn heavily on Weber's sociology (Turner 1974). This has rightly led, for example, to a concern with situating charismatic individuals within a wider economic, social and political milieu (Gellner 1969, 1981). More recently, the focus has been upon the ability of economic elites to define 'proper' religous practices and to manipulate charisma for their own ends (Caplan 1987; Gardner 1993b). While this article is written from within this tradition, it also

attempts to describe the social logic of material transactions that make Islamic reform effective in a particular context.

I hope to avoid a tendency in the literature whereby the 'cause' of Islamic social movements—wealth, inequality, political aspiration, or whatever it may be—is identified and is directly followed by an analysis of the 'effects'. These typically include: increasing influence of the Quran; reference to the Shar'iat; stress on particular kinds of behavioural and ritual codes of conduct; or affirmation that a particular form of leadership is legitimate and authentic. It is not my intention to question the existence of such obvious causes and their effects, but to describe the relationship between them—that is, to describe in social terms how causes are translated into successful effects, or how a particular vision of religious propriety is successfully conferred upon others.

The argument divides into four parts. The first describes the effects of the long-term exchange of people in ordering contemporary social hierarchy. The second narrates the biography of a sailor in order to illustrate the kinds of transformations individuals experience when they go to work on ships. The third examines the short-term cycle as defined by the exchange of gifts and commodities. The final part suggests that the competing hierarchies outlined in the previous section can only partially explain Islamic reform, because in order to understand its effectiveness we must examine the relative moral qualities of different kinds of commodity exchange.

II
Social order as history and myths of migration

The town of Mandvi and the village of Salaya lie on opposite banks of an estuarine port on the southern shores of Kachchh in the western part of Gujarat. Some distance inland is the village of Riyan where backfill, occasionally shifting in the wind, reveals an ancient quay in which detritus from distant ports is regularly uncovered. Exposed here is a tradition of trade that postdates Indus valley settlements but precedes the geomorphology of modern Kachchh. This archaeological trace indicates that western India has been cosmopolitan for millennia. The social, architectural and religious fabric of the region is constructed out of exchanges of trade goods, ideas and populations. From the 16th century, if not earlier, Mandvi was a departure point for pilgrims bound for Mecca; and throughout the 19th and early half of the 20th century it was the port of embarkation for migrants destined for Bombay, East Africa (Mangat 1969),

Zanzibar and Muscat (Allen 1978). A significant node within Indian Ocean and hinterland trade networks, Mandvi had a quayside slave market and regular Arab trading partners. The vicissitudes of enterprise, colonialism and migration brought many to and from the port. The resulting Muslim population, the focus of this article, forms between one-quarter and one-fifth of the town's 38,000 population. They variously claim to be descended from mercenaries, slaves, traders, saints and warriors, including the armies of Alexander the Great. Consequently, none of the Muslims in Mandvi claim to be autochthonous; their origins, in a broad westerly sweep, range from mainland Gujarat, Rajasthan, Sindh and Punjab, to Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, 'Arabia' and 'Africa'.

In the following section of the article I will suggest that for the Muslims of Mandvi, contemporary social order is based on the strength of such origin claims and that social hierarchy and community and individual prestige, although contested, are largely governed by an ordering of spaces and places that surround the Indian Ocean. In later sections of the article it will be argued that the ways in which these past migrations are understood is replicated in the ways that social power and legitimacy are created in the present. This can be most clearly seen in a recent challenge to what appears to be the traditional social order. In the last few decades of the 20th century, a group of men, traditionally humble sailors, made vast fortunes from 'predatory capitalism' and started to devise ways of countering a social hierarchy that continues to deny them the status they feel to be their due. It is these men, known as the Bhadala, who own the sixty or so ships that can be seen lying at precarious angles in the mud of the estuary during the monsoon season. None of the measures the Bhadala have adopted, such as emphasising their knowledge of Urdu and Arabic, or changing their dress or religious practices, have automatically bettered their social position in the eyes of the wider Muslim community (cf. Vatuk 1996). Rather, their persuasive powers come from the hundreds of young men bonded to labour in their shipyards and on their ships. Many such apprentices are drawn from groups that generally consider themselves to be of higher status than the Bhadala. Yet, as indentured labourers, they are apprenticed into a set of nautical skills and, more vitally, into an alternative vision of social relationships and hierarchy. To a significant degree this eventually distinguishes them from the religious and political sensibilities of their own kin. In this system, where apprenticeship contains a strong political aspect, the logic of social order familiar to the apprentice is gradually transformed. Rather than power being inherent to those claiming particular historical origins, the same prevailing

logic is passed onto the commodities which ship owners and eventually apprentices transact.

My argument then is that, at a fundamental level, social differentiation in Mandvi is traced to the putative geographical origin of the putative primogenitor of a particular lineage (*atak*) or marriage group. Not all places have produced equal kinds of people and some places have produced better people than others. However, once a place has produced a particular kind of person, the qualities they embody are mobile and can be carried to other places and passed to future generations. In order to clarify this argument I should now describe how people are thought to be constituted and to show that other factors—widely considered to be determinants of social hierarchy in India generally—are among Mandvi's Muslims related directly to the geographical origins of primogenitors, and to how well corresponding moral and social qualities have been preserved over time in a given population.

There are around thirty hierarchically ordered Sunni Muslim *jamats* (endogamous social groups) in Mandvi. The term is used as a descriptive adjective for the social and physical qualities of its members and as a noun connoting a specific section of the population. In neither case is the term used as a mere stereotype, but as reflecting a corporeal and spiritual condition. *Jamats* are variously composed of people who share the same traditional occupation or current occupation or ethnicity or regional origin, or of those who respect the authority of a particular shrine or framework for social administration and jurisprudence. Sometimes some of these conditions coincide. 'Men in Mandvi can—and, importantly, do—rank these *jamats* with consistency. Apical in this hierarchy are Saiyeds, putative descendents of the Prophet Mohammed. The many shrines scattered throughout the landscape are their burial places, entombing the charisma of the deceased. Their sanctity seeps into the human world, to be harnessed and transferred into objects and people by the residing Saiyed to cure or to enhance the life of the client. Devotees do not consider the *pir* (saint), and often the living Saiyed, as normal human beings. They are viewed as inhabiting a realm that is closer to the divine, from where they have power to work miracles and to transcend the boundaries between the living and the dead. They offer the potential for fulfilment of individual desire by issuing charms as antidotes to the perilous realms of spirits, witchcraft, bad health and infertility. Their divine powers of mediation are not based in an ideology of the universal equality of all men before God; rather their powers come directly from God, which places them above all other men (see Eickelman 1976; Gardner 1993b).

The vast majority of Muslims ranking below them are members of *jamats*, although the degree to which such organisations are elaborated and formalised varies considerably. Preferred marriage practices are similar among all Sunni Muslims in the town, with parallel cousin marriage generally being preferred over other forms of cousin marriage, which are in turn preferred to marriage between *ataks* (lineages). Marriages between *jamats* and polygamous marriages are rare. Such homogeneity of social organisation among Muslims of different status is regarded as a modern phenomenon: indeed, arguing that Muslim society is hierarchically graded by perceptions of space, place and blood would not make sense if this had always been the case. Rather, social evaluations of other Muslims by Muslims is a synchronic process that relies on the historical and mythical memory of migration patterns, and this is primarily determined by the social composition of *jamats*. The lowest-ranking Muslims are the descendants of slaves, brought from Zanzibar and Muscat in previous centuries (see Basu 1993). Those *jamats* said to have incorporated slavish blood are also of lowly rank, as are those that have incorporated people of other origins. For example, among the low-ranking Bhadala there are inter-marrying lineages with names that link them to modern Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other parts of India.

Different lands are accorded different values in the modern social order. The Gulf states and those who claim to originate from them are held in high esteem; 'Africa' and 'Africans' rank lowest, and all other areas fall somewhere in between. Social hierarchy is constructed through historical memories of place and segmentary genealogy, which feeds into the encompassing base metaphor of the body. There is a broad consensus that Muslim conceptions of purity (*pak*) and impurity (*napak*) are transient, derived from bodily processes (urination, menstruation, birth and death), and can be removed by acts of purification (Barth 1960: 139). Generally, bodily products originating above the neck are pure, while those from below the neck such as urine, sexual fluids and growing pubic hair are impure. These sources of impurity relate to the outside of a person: to the visible and tangible aspects of bodies. However, the same base metaphors of 'pure' and 'impure' are also deployed to describe qualities of blood and the kinds of corporeal characteristics that emerge from it. In other words, conceptions of purity and impurity determine the gradation of perceived qualities of blood and the emergent corporeal characteristics of individuals. Impurity, as shown below, is incurred by reproducing with those of a different status origin, as well as by marriage outside a particular *atak* or *jamat* in a more general sense. Therefore, for

the *jamats* which are considered corporeally impure, it matters little what kinds of marriage they conduct in the present as the damage, so to speak, was done long ago.

It was often explained to me that people have souls (*ruh*) that determine their corporeal characteristics (*jism*). The soul is comprised of two competing elements: a lower level (*nafs*), dictating an individual's desires, potential for violence and other base instincts; and a higher level (*aql*) that serves intellectual, spiritual and moral faculties. Together, these two levels act against each other to form human mind and body actions (*adat*). The distribution of these facets is seen to vary between individuals, and more importantly between *jamats*. Broadly, high-ranking Muslims are seen as having a greater proportion of *aql* and the resulting propensities toward discrimination, discernment, commerce and religious learning, which finds ultimate expression in spiritual efficacy and material abundance (*barakat*). Conversely, those regarded as having a greater proportion of the *nafs* element are consequently seen as having a propensity toward base appetites and personal indulgence. When people of different putative origins marry, the base aspects are enhanced in offspring and not the higher order of intellect. 'Miscegenation', of a kind, concentrates the base elements of the soul. And, not so metaphorically, skin colour is also seen as reflecting the character of the 'mind' or at least its potential effect over the body. Thus 'pure' blood and substance from generations of endogamous *atak* marriage is said to produce cool, controlled and calculating spiritual and business-like minds, which is reflected in the whitish complexion of the skin. Conversely, it is said that 'mixed blood' produces volatile kinds of people, whose tumultuous nature is reflected in heavy skin pigmentation. The corporeal division is entirely compatible with the model of transient purity and impurity outlined above that distinguishes between bodily substances from above and below the neck, in the sense that those who work with the mind (merchants or ship owners) are regarded as purer than those who work with their bodies (slaves, labourers or sailors).

Turning again to look at the composition of social hierarchy among Mandvi's Muslims, it is evident that traditional hierarchy is also a grading of employment. In descending order, ritual specialists, theologians, merchants, administrators, warriors, craftsmen and agriculturalists, and labourers rank over slave populations. While this hierarchy clearly reflects the division of labour, with spiritual and commercial activity being valued over physical labour, it is the purity of regional and ancestral origins that orders the potential for particular kinds of labour. The cursory summary

provided here does not really do justice to the history and complexity of the ideas underlying such division. However, the most potent theologians, clerics and mystics are generally attributed with origins that link them to Saudi Arabia and to one or other of the Prophet Mohammed's companions. Religious specialists of a lower order also generally claim to have come from lands with strong links to ancient Islam. Those who clearly display talents for rule and commerce are generally associated with the lands to the west of Kachchh, ranging from Sindh to Afghanistan. Artisans and agriculturalists are generally attributed with Indian origins, while the slave classes and one former mercenary group are viewed as having African origins. Although too simple, and echoing to some extent now largely discredited earlier anthropological work on the structure of 'Indian' society (see Dirks 2001), this taxonomy is the most general principle evident in the social organisation of Mandvi's Muslims.

It is tempting to argue that those who control capital resources and have had prolonged exposure to literary forms of representation are in a better position to manufacture the purity of their origins than those at the lower end of the scale (see Raheja 1996). However, this is not the way in which cynicism is expressed towards the system locally, as challenges made against it do not rely on occupational change nor, perhaps surprisingly, solely on changing claims to religious piety (cf. Mines 1975). There are two, more or less effective, forms of social action open to those competing for status with this social order. The first strategy involves making claims to a prestigious ancestry, to companions of the Prophet Mohammed or a notable successor. This method, while seldom being rejected outright, is of limited efficacy. For example, those who at some unknown point in the past adopted the name 'Qureshi' are today known as 'Kachchhi Qureshi', a designation implying they are home-grown aspirants and therefore inauthentic.[1]

The second strategy involves denying the authenticity and morality of this hierarchy and suggesting an alternative. This returns us to a central theme of this article and relates to the activities of the Bhadala ship

[1] The Prophet Mohammed, son of Abdullah, was a scion of the Quresh (also Koresh, Quraish, Quraysh and Quresh) tribe of Mecca. It is said that they were descendants of Nadr ibn Kananah in the line of Ishmael, himself descendant of Abraham (with Hagar), Noah and Adam. As guardians of the Kaaba built by Abraham, the Quresh claim to have enjoyed special honour among the 'tribes' of Arabia. As they controlled the physical structures and the ritual practices conducted there before the coming of the Prophet Mohammed, they clearly held positions of social and economic significance. Among the Kachchhi Qureshis, however, the tradition is that their ancestors were the butchers who provided meat to the holy warriors who accompanied Mohammed during his lifetime.

owners. The Bhadala used to live in Mandvi (part of the town still carries their name), but over the last century have migrated over the river to settle in Salaya. There they live in dependent isolation from Mandvi's Muslims, but are incorporated into Mandvi's social hierarchy as 'mixed bloods' of low rank. The Bhadala Jamat is composed of around forty *ataks* of diverse regional and ethnic origins. Among them marriage patterns broadly mirror the patterns of social organisation and hierarchy that define the shipping industry. Ship owners, captains and crews may belong to different *ataks* but may also intermarry to some extent. For example, Bhadala Pathans putatively from Afghanistan marry with Bhadala Turks putatively from Turkmenistan. Such marriages are often attempts at creating alliances, loyalties and differences and have logic in their own right (Simpson 2001). However, for the purposes of this argument, these types of inter-*atak* marriage are seen by many among Mandvi's Muslim population as defiling, and it is from these practices and the common suggestion that in the past the Bhadala married freely with Africans that they have gained a reputation for being of 'mixed blood'.

Over the last thirty years, however, the Bhadala have prospered. Traditionally sailors on the vessels of Shia merchants, they now own the fleet and employ hundreds of client sailors, the majority of whom are recruited from Mandvi. Given that Mandvi's Muslims view the Bhadala as being of 'mixed blood', the Bhadalas' attempts at improving their own social status are revealing of fundamental ways in which the existing hierarchy is difficult to transcend from within. Rather than attempting to move within it, as in the Qureshi example, the Bhadala are attempting to undermine its legitimacy by questioning the principles on which it is based. The focus of their attack are the Saiyeds, the majority of whom they regard as profane fraudsters who practise magic before devotees blinded by ignorance. By rejecting the Saiyeds' authority, the Bhadala are implicitly undermining the whole social hierarchy that maintains ritual relationships with shrines and that marks relative social status against the putative origins of the Saiyeds. Bhadala rhetoric also singles out many of the ritual practices and festive occasions marked by Mandvi's Muslims as corrupt and as either ignorant or syncretic.

There are a series of social and material conditions that dictate the direction, depth and content of the Bhadalas' vision of Islamisation. Their religious reform is given vitality and conviviality (to its adherents) by what, who and where it opposes and represents. Communal hostility in the early 1980s, primarily between Bhadalas and Hindus, has provided a

necessary rhetorical and actual 'other' for their religious vision. Likewise, by attempting to undermine the legitimacy of Mandvi's social hierarchy, the Bhadalas' religious message counters the principles on which that hierarchy is based and in the process creates a further 'other' which is Muslim (frequently their sailors' kin). Furthermore, they have disposable wealth with which to construct religious institutions and patronise religiously learned personalities in Salaya. Of most importance, however, is their control of a large dependent constituency of sailors (mostly from Mandvi), which gives them audience, brawn and a wider influence across the river. Given this background. I now turn to examine the biography of a Muslim from Mandvi who was apprenticed onto a Bhadala ship. This account is intended to give ethnographic substance to the connections between Muslim social hierarchy in Mandvi and Bhadala attempts at religious reform. Mandvi and Salaya stand on opposite sides of the river estuary; these places and their differing social ideologies converge in the actions of apprentice sailors who make the journey across the river from Mandvi to work on Bhadala ships.

III
The biography of a sailor

Majid's biography is a clear account of the migration process between India and the Gulf states and the changes of status it entails. He was born into a poor family belonging to a high status mercantile *jamat*. Leaving school at the age of ten, he took on a variety of poorly paid jobs throughout India in businesses owned by other Kachchhis, before returning to Mandvi to start an apprenticeship in a Bhadala-owned shipyard. When I met him he was a brash 30-year-old whose family lived in comfort from his remittances in a large house equipped with a dining table and a whole array of electrical appliances. In contrast, his origins were humble, and a number of times he proudly took me to see the one-roomed rented house with no utilities where he had been born. This transformation, from poverty to relative affluence, is common to many families who sent their sons to sea. Despite the obvious comforts it has brought them, the decision to allow Majid to become a sailor had been a difficult one for his family. His parents regarded, and still do, the Bhadala as a dirty and corrupt people. That their son should become a client of such men was an abomination of the prevailing social order as they saw it. They were also afraid of the ways in which the work and the experience overseas would change him. At the time they lived in an area of the town that

was home to many sailors and Majid's parents were only too aware of the arrogant and disrespectful attitudes of those who returned home after seasons at sea. In Majid's case, as we shall see, this concern was not ill-founded.

When Majid started work in the shipyards making tea, carrying timber and learning the ropes, he found the environment brutal and humiliating. His high social status in Mandvi meant nothing, other than being a further source of humiliation and ridicule. Whether it is deliberate or not, the Bhadala organise those they employ from Mandvi in ways that contradict and subvert age and *jamat* hierarchies. The result is that a new form of sociality is created in the workplace that revolves around the relative experience of those working on the ship, all of whom defer to the ship's owner. After a few months in the shipyards, Majid's employer decided that the lad would make a suitable sailor and assigned him to the crew of an old and decrepit ship. Two disastrous voyages later, Majid joined the crew of a newer ship carrying cargoes of onions, cattle fodder, bamboo and goats back and forth between India and the Gulf states. Gradually, as he matured and gained experience at sea, he earned an increasingly large wage. He lost his virginity to a Russian prostitute in Dubai, tasted whisky, became abstemious, and learned how to transport goods into India without paying import tax. With the passing of each season Majid's network of contacts developed and in 1995 he left the Bhadala's ship and signed a contract to work on a supply vessel in the oilfields of Bombay High. Such a career leap is common and a great many men who start work on the Bhadalas' fleet eventually jump ship in the Gulf to take up employment on supply vessels and in other semi-skilled sectors of the economy. The starting monthly salary for Majid's new position was of around Rs 23,000. This sum was more than three times as much as a well-qualified graduate could expect to earn in Mandvi. In the years that followed Majid was further rewarded with regular promotions and concomitant increases in salary.

During the time he crewed the Bhadalas' ships, Majid slowly, but not imperceptibly, adopted the political and religious attitudes of his employers, which were increasingly at variance to those of his family. This change was reflected in his more assiduous observation of prayers, his clothing, his veneration of the Quran, and in his disavowal of public displays of false and immodest rituals during some festivals. But the most notable difference between Majid and his family was their relationship to the Saiyeds' cults. His family are regular clients of a shrine which owned the house in which Majid was born. These days Majid refuses to

visit this shrine or have any dealings with its patrons. However, as Majid's remittances increased, his mother started to send daily parcels of food to the Saiyeds. The constant tension between Majid and his family on this issue provoked some remarkable exchanges. Majid's mother would frequently accuse him of 'forgetting where he came from' and of 'ignoring those he owed'. Majid would counter by saying that his mother was giving her (his, their) money to 'beggars', adding that she was wrong to think that Saiyeds were divine figures to 'whom she could never give enough'. Both of these expressions were appropriated from the wider 'anti-Saiyed' rhetoric that prevails in shipyards and in the weekly meetings held in Salaya. Such tension is, however, lopsided because Majid's mother, among others, also respects Majid's 'new' religious ideas because they carry the seal of Gulf authenticity. Although Majid no longer works on the ships that sail from Mandvi port, whenever he is invited for prayers at the Friday Mosque or to the mosque-shrine of Mukhdummi Sha in Salaya, upon meeting those on whose ships he used to work he will stoop before them and touch his eyes and mouth against the hand that is offered to him, much as others do when they meet a Saiyed in a shrine.

IV
The exchange of goods

Majid's changing horizons and opinions are common to many men who go to work in shipyards. In part this is due to an elective affinity between the demands of the ship owners and the aspirations of the neophytes. This is reflected in the logic of material exchanges, a logic that ultimately underpins the ways in which religious reform has become a successful social project for the Bhadala. In Chris Gregory's well-known argument on the separation of gifts and commodities, the former appear as an exchange of inalienable objects between interdependent transactors, while commodity exchange occurs when independent transactors exchange alienable objects (1982). Similarly, here, 'gifts' are valued because they have a biography and a social life: they move from the unknown bazaar into familiar relationships and they entail obligation and interest. However, when such goods are exchanged for cash they can then simultaneously embody qualities similar to 'gifts', depending on the relation between the donor and the recipient. But when such commodities are exchanged for cash with an independent broker, the sailor dissolves the qualities inherent in them that make them good 'gifts' (of either kind).

The following argument is primarily about the exchange of objects. Similar arguments could be made for flows of cash (see Osella and Osella 2000; Stirrat 1995), but in the case described here cash is directly substitutable for goods and other kinds of cash when, in many instances, objects are not. Furthermore, I only focus on the prevailing downward flow of goods and not on speculative gifts strategically given to attract material and spiritual patronage. While cash and purely speculative transactions are clearly important elements of men's lives (see Osella and Osella 2000; Werbner 1989), they are of a different order to the routine maintenance of status under discussion here.

Ships return to Mandvi before the seas begin to grow rough in June. This is a period of great excitement in both Mandvi and Salaya, as loved ones return with new goods and fashions. The sizeable hoards of goods that accompany returning sailors range from the mundane to the wonderful. Typically, sailors return with soaps, perfumes, clothing, electrical items, cassettes, watches and cameras. The wealth of ship owners facilitates more extravagant imports, such as an ambulance, a sunbed and a racing Honda motorcycle. The opportunities to ride a motorcycle with slick tyres, narrow mudguard clearances and taut suspension are limited in a village where the roads are not metalled. But to see commodities purely in terms of their utilitarian value is to miss the point of possessing them. Jock Stirrat argues that the role of similar consumption patterns among fishermen on the north-west coast of Sri Lanka is to demonstrate that one is capable of owning such objects and to arouse jealousy in others (1995: 107). In Salaya, while jealously and provoking jealousy in others are publicly decried, such goods are explicitly about claiming standing over others who do not have the resources to possess and, more importantly, to procure such goods. Broadly, such extravagant goods are public representations of less tangible forms of wealth, but they also display an individual's power to extract booty from a world economic system of which they can claim to be a part. As in Stirrat's case, the 'worth' is not the monetary value of the 'commodity', but the qualities inherent in these goods that reveal the individual's power to procure them.

The attribution of worth and value to such goods appears to be somewhat anomalous. For example, a highly prized Sony television bought without tax or duty surcharges in Dubai can be obtained in exchange for the same amount of currency as an India-made television with similar features from a local dealership. Additionally, with the increasing liberalisation of the Indian economy and the reduction of once prohibitive import

duties on foreign goods, Sony televisions are now available from specialist import shops in Bombay. However, the same model from Bombay is less valued than one from Dubai. Those in possession of a Sony may well make reference to the quality of the parts and workmanship, and the longer service guarantee offered by the (conveniently located) agent in Dubai. But to see such preferences as rational processes based on a perfect flow of consumer information and an assessment of opportunity cost is again to miss the point. It is unlikely that anyone would exchange a 12-month-old Sony television for an Indian-made one with a bigger tube, super-woofers and split-screen viewing.

Every Muslim I met in Mandvi has at least one personal connection overseas. Those distant figures are inundated with requests for foreign goods and services. Whatever the connection between the émigré and the individual in Mandvi, very few such requests are honoured because of the time, expense and bureaucracy involved. Those who work on ships have the time and the resources to secure, transport and personally oversee the execution of such demands. Thus men of low status on ships embody an enviable degree of power in the eyes of those who do not travel. Ships may be kept waiting in port for many weeks, giving sailors time to secure goods knowing that they can accompany their purchases home, minimising the possibility that they will be stolen or damaged.

Frankly, I was initially somewhat puzzled by the way people would constantly ascribe price tags to items such as Sony televisions. Figures would commonly be given in rupees, but also in rials, and yet more prestigiously in American dollars. This kind of counting could represent a form of aggregated value, a marker of prestige depending on the amount of currency involved, or as a form of analogy standing for substitutability (Strathern 1992: 171). However, the example of Sony and Indian-made television sets implies that something other than monetary value gives the good its worth. Two apparently similar goods cost the same, but are evidently not worth the same because they are not substitutable, and this is where the life of objects perhaps begins to differ from that of cash. What provides worth is the sense of the unquantifiable exogenous power in the 'thing'. It could be argued that the value in the Sony television set over the Videotron one was that the former was simply more difficult to procure. However, the value of the good cannot be given in strict monetary terms, nor in terms of its accessibility, because the value is given by access and control over such goods, which are quantifiable through various kinds of relationships between people (*sabandhi*). The power inherent

in imported goods is translated into a variety of different forms of relationship, which together reveal what makes 'big men', how men relate with each other, what are worthwhile objects, and the role that worthwhile objects play in constructing men and their relationships.

The goods that sailors return home with are purchased overseas with a variety of destinations in mind: for personal use and display, as 'gifts' for relatives, friends and neighbours, and for sale to individuals and to independent wholesalers. Leaving aside the personal use and accumulation of these goods, I will now examine the types of transaction involved in exchanging goods, which become respectively 'gifts', 'commoditised gifts' or 'transactable commodities'.

Returning sailors bring with them a series of items to 'gift' relatives, friends, allies and potential allies. These goods actualise and modify social relations. From the sailor's perspective, giving away consumer items is a way of acquiring status among his kin group and within a wider social network, but it is also a way of maintaining control over the goods and the people to whom they have been entrusted. The presentation of gifts beholds the receiver to the giver, although this relationship is not without moral peril or commitment because it will need to be regularly replenished. Receiving creates a greater sense of relatedness to the donor than giving establishes a sense of relatedness to the recipient. These prestations are not reciprocal in material terms; rather they are reciprocal in terms of the respect and status given to the donor. For the sailors, such donations entail an element of calculation because they do not have access to an unlimited supply of goods. Presenting a watch to another man creates a tie between giver and recipient, but the efficacy of this relationship can dwindle if it is not refreshed with similar gifts in subsequent seasons. Thus, most gifts represent escalating long-term investments in the loyalty of particular constituents. In short, the more the sailor gives, the more status he attracts but the more he will have to give in the future. By doing this he is directly emulating the patronage of his employer, who in turn is conforming to pervasive rules of status and constituency-building that run throughout Muslim society in Mandvi. Yet, the sailor is at pains to draw a fragile line and not give away all that he has or make copious donations which are impossible to sustain in the long term. In this sense, giving and not giving are ways of finding a balance between 'ameliorating his own social and economic position and assisting the advancement of the larger group' (Osella and Osella 2000: 127). Therefore, there is constant tension between the need to give in order to become a 'big man'

and the fact that giving too much can end in ridicule or at least the decline of one's status position.

Mattison Mines argues that 'big men', in the south Indian context, are quintessentially hierarchical figures who hold individual 'statuses of eminence' among their circle of supporters (1994). The 'big man' creates and defines his constituencies by redistributing resources and acting as an altruistic benefactor. In this formulation, the role of institutions, such as temples or caste associations, is key to attaining and maintaining big-men's status (Mines and Gourishankar 1990: 762–63). Likewise, Thomas Blom Hansen identifies a form of 'big-manship' in Bombay known as '*dadaism*', a form of maverick, non-institutional, political and social power maintained through a multitude of local, self-made networks (1996: 158). Mines focuses only on those who are apical within a hierarchy, while Hansen describes juniors emulating the patterns of behaviour of the apical *dada*. I would like to take this idea a little further and suggest that the model of patronage, exemplified by both 'big-man' and *dada*, applies to all transactions conducted by sailors and ship owners alike. All men, unless they are the biggest 'big men', are suppliant to other 'big men'. Each fleet is headed by an apical figure, under whom there are other successive tiers of lesser 'big men', the highest orders of which are part of the kin group of the apical figure. Below them are further ranks stretching down to the lowest sailor, who also appears as a 'big man', if only in relations with others who are not sailors. Each man is at times at the pinnacle of his own pyramid of transactions, while simultaneously being in the lower orders of others. Each segmented pyramid is presided over by an apical 'big man' who maintains client relationships, which are based not so much on discipleship as on patron-client relations in which a leader supplies booty in return for support (Turner 1974: 24–25). The 'big man' designs his own political and religious constituencies, although the structure and numbers of his constituents are dictated primarily by the size of his fleet or by his ability to present goods or favours to his clients.

Sailors not only meet the demands of relatives and friends for goods. Equally important, as they aim to become 'big men', are objects that are resold within client networks and potential client networks. Typically smaller items, these goods are rarely sold in the bazaar; far more commonly, buyers are strategically sought through kin and friend networks. The sailor acts as a guarantor of the commoditised gift, standing for a verifiable and prestigious origin. Despite the fact that money is exchanged in these transactions, the new owners will describe goods in terms of the

procuring sailor because this attests to its all-important power. Tracing the migration routes of commodities through the biographies of sailors affirms their authenticity; without such a biography the qualities imbued in the transaction are diminished. Here the exchange is one of cash for booty, but the good does not become a disembodied commodity. Part of its identity remains dependent on its biography (Kopytoff 2000: 66–68) and on the figure that guarantees its authenticity. Even through cash transactions, the qualities of the donor remain inherent in the commoditised gift, and access to such goods also reflects the recipient's ability to procure goods even if money is exchanged in the process. In this form of transaction, the sailor acts as a patron, and the receiver is beholden to the giver. Through such transactions, sailors also gradually become bigger 'big men', their status increasing with their ability to procure foreign goods to donate as gifts or sell as commodified gifts.

The third way of disposing of booty is entirely different. Some sailors sell their personal cargo directly to a wholesaler rather than relying on word of mouth and networks of personal influence. The two wholesalers I was acquainted with are wonderful, strange and highly unusual people. There is good reason for the concurrence of their personal idiosyncrasy and their occupations: what is striking about these brokers of prestigious foreign goods is that they are women. In Mandvi, to see the Muslim women related to sailors on the streets was unusual, to see them freely engaging men in conversation in public was highly unusual. These women were shrewd and cunning negotiators: coming into the bazaar in the evenings, they would improbably remove cartons of cigarettes or bottles of perfume from their clothing before prospective clients. Widely thought of as prostitutes, they were in the business of commercially transacting commodities better known as 'gifts'. They seldom handled large or expensive items, restricting themselves to soaps, perfumes, batteries, cigarettes, watches, compact discs, branded clothes and electronic toys. Procuring goods through such agents gives the good a higher value than if it had been purchased in Bombay. However, goods purchased from a specialised broker have a lesser value than those either gifted or transacted by a relative or friend. These women mediate between social realms—between sailors and townsfolk, and between sea and land—buying commodities in bulk from sailors and reselling them in the town. Regarded as sinful women, their business is not based on enticing displays or on rehearsed sales banter, because the qualities clients require are inherent to the objects themselves. The improbable figure of the mediator obfuscates the formation of a relationship between the sailor and the consumer of the good

because the inversion of the conventional mercantile gender and style ensures that the biography of the good is ruptured and depersonalised. By disposing of goods in this way, sailors make money in a single transaction, but by doing so they make considerably less than they would if they had disposed of the goods individually. Although part of the rationale behind this transaction is to realise a profit, sailors willingly incur a hypothetical 'loss' in order to avoid developing a cumbersome network of clients too large for them to maintain. Bottles of perfume and bars of soap could be sold in individual transactions, but as commodified gifts such transactions would necessitate further transactions in the future.

Land-lubbers desire all three kinds of goods because they are imbued with the wondrous power of the 'outside'; such goods also reflect the social standing of the owner by implying that they have the social influence to extract goods from others. In other words, the exchange of a good that provides the sailor status also allows the recipient to claim elevated status in the social realm outside the confines of the transaction. Thus, constituency-building is not simply a matter of unwitting clients receiving from powerful patrons; clients also benefit from their association with the patron in other spheres. In these ways it is not so much the goods themselves that are used to create social bridges or fences, but the kinds of exchange through which foreign goods are integrated into the local economy.

V
Transaction of goods with religious worth

The preceding discussion has outlined the logic applied to foreign commodities as values of exchange in Mandvi. I now turn to look at the ways in which images and ideas of Islam are imported and commoditised through these models of exchange. I will argue that religious objects (from mosques through to clothing), occasions (prayers and commemorations) and practices (public Quran readings and sermons) are treated as if they were transactable objects. The ways in which religious values and paraphernalia are transacted are the same as 'gifts' and 'commoditised gifts' but, importantly, fall short of becoming 'transactable commodities'. This deliberate selection of particular paths of transaction reflects the political and social interests of those responsible for the reform process because the status of the Bhadala ship owner is dependent on his ability to appear as patron and as exclusive source of religious gifts. Thus, access

to prestigious mosques, ritual events and certain kinds of ritual paraphernalia is assiduously controlled by ship owners who, as apical big men of sizable constituencies, do not allow such things to enter realms in which religious value becomes freely transactable and depersonalised. The values inherent in imported artefacts and ideas are used by a relatively small group of men to enhance their own social status and, as an integral part of this process, to reform social and religious practice among their constituents.

Ships mainly call in to the ports of the United Arab Emirates, especially Dubai, where the majority of Mandvi's Muslim labour migrants also work. In Mandvi the whole region is glossed as the 'Gulf', as in 'My brother works in the Gulf', regardless of which state he is actually employed in. Depending somewhat on context, this reflects the way in which the region is imagined by those who have never seen it, a generality in which sailors are complicit when they are at home. Importantly, the 'Gulf' region (not explicitly Saudi Arabia) is also held to be the cradle of Islam, the location of the life of the Prophet Mohammed and his successors. The area is seen as radiating power and as carrying the sacred marks of religious triumph and defeat. Thus it is that when religious goods and practices are imported from the 'Gulf', they too carry with them elevated status and efficacy.

Skullcaps, robes, slippers, prints and rose-water imported by the ship owners are never sold to a commodity agent. Ship owners gift and frequently sell such items to sailors and apprentices in their shipyards. Other commercial and spiritual intermediaries are denied legitimacy in this promulgation of the faith because such figures mitigate transactions that actualise particular kinds of social relationships by depersonalising the biography of migration. Thus, social and religous reform is premised on the strict control of the flows of status within patron-client relationships through limiting the transactional arenas in which social change is effected. The ship owner does not of course have a monopoly on procuring symbols of high religious standing. Copies of the Quran, items of clothing and prestigious ways of performing rituals can be imported by any number of sailors. However, the status of the individual whose biography attests to the authenticity of the good also plays a role in the value attached to it. Simply, goods imported by men of high standing are imbued with a greater value than those brought home by humble sailors. In this sense, the inherent power of foreign goods reinforces the existing social hierarchy of the shipping industry. With a consumer item, a sailor has to

decide whether to present it to A, B or C. It is a limited good and competition for his largesse is zero sum. If A becomes the recipient then B and C lose; or alternatively, the sailor loses B and C. It is possible to argue that the opposite is true of prayers and rituals, because A, B and C can all attend and benefit from a sailor's patronage without entering the ship owner's orbit of influence. However, because of the hierarchical nature of patronage, the sailor can only be sure of enticing his inferiors to participate in such prestigious events. Through this he gains further support, but does not gain extra status within the shipping hierarchy. Only the ship owners can confer the most powerful forms of status gain—in this social sphere at least. Rituals and prayers sponsored by them remain the most prestigious and efficacious in terms of status elevation. Invitations to attend prayers during public festivals are not limited goods in the strict fashion, but they are severely restricted. Therefore, we can conclude that power and the quasi-magical qualities ascribed to foreign lands and the things brought from them are not entirely divorced from the social relations and position of those who import them. Yet, in the traditional social order, those men with the greatest power to import such things are of low social status precisely because of the logic that gives their goods powers of social persuasion.

VI
Cutting out the middleman

In India, as elsewhere, the perennial targets for reformers of Muslim practice are those claiming powers that allow them to mediate between the human world and the realms of spirits and *jinns*, or even the realms of divine power. Reformers tend to stress the equal relationship between the individual and a common god. Clearly, from such a perspective there is little room for the presence of those who claim to have agency within divine realms. In Mandvi, while Saiyeds claim and are ascribed powers that enable them to mediate between the mundane and the sacred, those owning ships decry this state of affairs in both formal and informal settings. Mandvi's main shrines contain modest mosques; in contrast, the newly constructed mosques of Salaya stand alone. Gifts such as the new mosques also carry with them the same powers as the commodities discussed previously.

The tomb of Mukhdummi Sha stands at the entrance to Salaya. It was reconstructed as a mosque and area of congregation by two ship owners in the mid-1980s. It is the site of a weekly meeting, sponsored by ship owners, where luminaries are invited to address the assembled on matters of religious propriety. Although such meetings are public, sailors are individually invited by their employers to attend. Much of what they hear takes as a negative example the practices of their own kin groups and *jamats*. The subjects range from Quranic interpretation to how to perform a correct marriage. At these meetings, Saiyeds are derogatorily described as 'magic men', 'Muslim Brahmins' and beggars. Their claims to prophetic descent are sometimes dismissed as fraudulent, but more commonly the powers they claim are dismissed as heretical. The meetings end with thanks to the benevolence and piety of such and such a ship owner whose generosity made the congregation possible. On such occasions, what makes good and righteous religious practice is wrapped in a particular way of conceiving time and space. The terms 'traditional', 'modern' and 'syncretic', problematic as they are in anthropological discussion, are words that shipyard workers hear at these meetings describing social transformation and the religious vision of Salaya's ship owners. 'Tradition', frequently characterised as resembling the irregular teeth of a donkey, refers to the order of hierarchy and religious practice perceived as characterising the social life of Mandvi. The 'modern', as in the equal teeth of a comb, is the social ordering of Salaya, ships, commodities and what are construed as new forms of Islam. Meanwhile 'syncretic', translated from the Gujarati word *ugulumbugulum* (all mixed up), refers to a distant past when Muslims were Hindus (or at least lived elsewhere)—a perilous condition that they are growing out of and away from with the passing of time by constantly improving and refining their religious practices. In this model, the 'traditional', inferior and anterior system of social order is organised around encompassing hierarchical principles such as origin, blood and substance. In the Bhadalas' rhetoric, this archaic and corrupt social order is being replaced with one where it is not so much the origin of men that gives status but the origin of the objects they transact. Not all Saiyeds are denounced by the Bhadala and neither is the efficacy of all shrines, Haji Pir in the north-west of Kachchh, Haji Ali in Bombay and Ajmer Sheriff in Rajasthan being the obvious exceptions. Collectively, the Bhadala *jamat* have patronised one individual Saiyed to the exclusion of all others, but in the process his identity as a Saiyed has become somewhat obscure. He is not associated with a shrine or with a particular sacred place. More importantly, since he is not from

Mandvi but from a town in the hinterland, he remains somewhat separate from local status politics. So, rather like the case described for Sylhet by Katy Gardner (1993b: 232–33), the holy men are reinvented by the newly rich and are stripped of their charisma in order to become servants of a newly defined purism.

Attacking the role and status accorded to local Saiyeds is an obvious way of denying the legitimacy of a social hierarchy based principally on genealogical origin and the purity of blood. However, there is perhaps a more important reason why ship owners deny the legitimacy of rank and file Saiyeds, and that is because they wish to control what socially makes men and thus what determines status. Islamic patronage, which works in a remarkably similar way to the exchange of goods, is a method of social elevation via 'gift' and 'commodified gift' exchanges. Prestigious religious practice is not farmed out to intermediaries because the personal biography and agency of the individual sailor or ship owner is vital for him to claim elevated social status. Saiyeds, like commodity brokers, are seen as prostituting themselves to their clients and in the process divest particular religious practices of their individual certificate of authenticity.

The Bhadala are moving practice and action towards a vision of Islamic perfection (Robinson 1983). It is, however, only their vision and it would be decried elsewhere as heterodox. Embedded in this process are features unique to their political and social aspirations as well as to the ritual marks of the sailing season. Importing Islam refers to tangible religious objects such as the Quran; to things, such as clothes and foodstuffs, which are imbued with specific religious meanings; to architectural styles and techniques; and to religious practices. These things, perhaps surprisingly, are also imported from Dubai, the commodities' cornucopia, rather than from Saudi Arabia. The signs and ideals of orthodoxy and orthopraxy they import have become central to the ways in which the Bhadala organise local social life. Although their social project is carried out in their own terms and autonomously from other Muslim groups, it is effective because those they employ take its rhetoric and practices home with them.

In the early years of his career, a sailor is typically bonded to his work by cash advances and the promise of life overseas. The longer he serves, the larger and more complicated these debts become, as further cash advances and loans are made. This relationship is premised on mutual trust but dominated by economic and political inequality. One ship owner expressed it in the following fashion: 'They labour for me and make

sure no harm comes to my ships; in return I look after them and their family's problems—I pay for their houses and for their weddings.' He used the verb 'to pay' in a loose sense, but the ethos of patronage is clear. However, the ebbs and flows of respect and patronage are not symmetrical. A few days later, in a more lyrical mood, the same ship owner was sitting in the cabin looking down on his labourers repairing the decking, when he said: 'Look at these people! They are mine. I tell them when they can eat, shit, when they can have sex and when they can die!' Through the labours of apprenticeship the neophyte adopts the religious and social practices espoused by the ship owner. The greater the correspondence between the ship owner's perspectives on social hierarchy, proper social conduct and religious practice, then the faster the apprentice's promotion, the greater the paternalism and the more beneficial the patronage.

Among the Bhadala, social hierarchy is predominantly based on an individual's or an *atak*'s influence over the ships, the critical capital resource. This contrasts sharply to the way hierarchy is understood in Mandvi. The apprentice is drawn from one system and gradually assimilated into the other. The two models are not entirely contradictory as transformation from one to the other is given continuity by consistent linguistic and behavioural principles of respect and patronage.

VII
Conclusion

The dominant patterns of gifting and giving reveal how short-term cycles of exchange are being used by ship owners to transform the long-term reproductive cycle of social order. At another level it is also apparent that Majid starts life as a high-ranking Muslim, goes to work for a low-ranking ship owner, and ends up investing his social capital in producing status in the terms of his employers. At the heart of this transformation stand the values created through goods distributed in particular ways. It could be argued that the realms of religious goods and cash are deliberately kept separate because of the defiling properties of cash, which either has to be 'cooked' or 'cleaned' in order for it to be assimilated into the religious economy. This is not the case, because much of the cash generated among sailors and their patrons is morally dubious, though for the most part from outside Kachchh. This does not prevent ship owners from transacting religious artefacts as commodified gifts for the cash of their

sailors. Therefore, it is not the cash in the transaction that makes commodities the least desirable, but the lack of biography that accompanies the thing (cf. Osella and Osella 2000). It has been argued that the figure of the independent religious intermediary presides over a corrupt and archaic hierarchy and is further isolated by being removed from the legitimate circulation of short-term exchanges. Thus, Islamic reform, as an expression of social aspiration, is effective precisely because the rhetorical assertions of its proponents are mirrored in the control of short-term exchanges—both are aimed at transforming the distribution of status within the long-term cycle of reproduction.

From the Bhadalas' perspective, Saiyeds and commodity brokers are of the same liminal order because both disrupt the power inherent in relations of accumulative exchange. In the case of the commodity broker, this process is quite literal: they transcend social boundaries and are widely thought of as prostitutes. In the case of the Saiyeds, this ascription relies more on metaphors associating them with femininity and Hinduism, and the accusation that they flaunt immoral claims to status and power. They are seen as having the potential to depersonalise meritorious religious initiatives by absorbing them into their own religious cults. In other words, the figure of the Saiyed has the potential to absorb the migration biographies of religious practices in Mandvi and to claim to their followers that such religious knowledge naturally belongs to them as a product of their birth and descent. Such claims would clearly deny merit or status for those taking the initiative to import them. In the former case, the commodity broker is the last resort for the sailor, to whom he turns if he needs cash when his other obligations and aspirations are fulfilled. Here, turning such goods into cash is the least valued of the sailor's options because the opportunity costs of the various transaction paths for such goods show that some things (relationships) are more valuable than cash. In the latter case, ship owners attempt to control flows of religious goods in order to maintain their inherent power, which leads to the social devotion of their clients. It follows that importing artefacts and practices signals prestige, and that to farm such things out to others, or to wholesale them to intermediaries, would transform them into transactable commodities, which are categorically incompatible with maintaining the types of social relationships described here. Transacting gifts and commodified gifts are tantamount to transacting parts of the self that have been formed by voyaging the high seas to the prestigious realm of the 'Gulf'.

The logic of social hierarchy under a Saiyed and under a ship owner is underwritten by evaluations of the relative status and origins of 'things'. What makes men in the first hierarchy are the 'facts' of migration and perceptions of bodily code and substance. The Bhadala are attempting to transform this ranking into one premised on the ability to present 'gifts' and 'commoditised gifts'. For them status is not legitimately derived from the fabrications of 'history' but from the ability to convince others that a particular vision of the world is the correct one through the controlled transaction of goods that have prestigious origins. For ship owners, what makes men is their ability to consume and reproduce loyal crews of men like Majid based on contact with the 'Gulf' and access to the prestigious commodities available from its bazaars.

REFERENCES

AHMAD, L, ed. 1978 [1973]. *Caste and social stratification among Muslims in India* New Delhi: Manohar.

ALLEN, C. 1978. Sayyids, Shets and Sultans Politics and trade in Masqat under the Al Bu Said, 1785–1915. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington.

APPADURAI, A. 2000 [1986]. Introduction: Commodities and the politics of value. *In* A. Appadurai, ed., *The social life of things: Commodities in perspective*, pp. 3–63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BARTH, F. 1960. The system of social stratification in Swat, North Pakistan. *In* E. Leach, ed., *Aspects of caste in India, Ceylon, and North-West Pakistan*, pp. 133–46. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BASU, H. 1993. The Siddi and the cult of Bava Gor in Gujarat. *Journal of Indian anthropological society* 28, 3: 289–300.

BENSON, J. 1983. Politics and Muslim ethnicity in south India. *Journal of anthropological research* 39, 1: 42–59.

BLOCH, M. and J. PARRY. 1995 [1989]. Introduction: Money and the morality of exchange. *In* J. Parry and M. Bloch, eds., *Money and the morality of exchange*, pp. 1–32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CAPLAN, L. 1987. *Studies in religious fundamentalism*. London: Macmillan Press.

DIRKS, N. 2001. *Caste of mind: Colonialism and the making of modern India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

EICKELMAN, D. 1976. *Moroccan Islam: Tradition and society in a pilgrimage center*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

GARDNER, K. 1993a. Desh-Bidesh: Sylheti images of home and away. *Man* (n.s.) 28, 1: 1–15.

———. 1993b. Mullahs, migrants, and miracles: Travel and transformation in Sylhet. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 27, 2: 213–35.

GEERTZ, C. 1968 *Islam observed: Religious development in Morocco and Indonesia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

GELLNER, E. 1969. *Saints of the Atlas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

GELLNER, E. 1981 *Muslim society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

GREGORY, C. 1982. *Gifts and commodities*. London· Academic Press.

HANSEN, T B. 1996. Recuperating masculinity: Hindu nationalism, violence and the exorcism of the Muslim 'other'. *Critique of anthropology* 16, 2: 137–72.

KOPYTOFF, I. 2000 [1986]. The cultural biography of things: Commoditization as process. *In* A. Appadurai, ed., *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, pp. 64–91. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

MANGAT, J. 1969 *The history of Asians in East Africa c. 1886–1945*. Oxford· Oxford University Press.

MINES, M. 1975 Islamisation and Muslim ethnicity in south India *Man* (n.s.) 10, 3: 404–19

——— 1988. Conceptualizing the person· Hierarchical society and individual autonomy in India. *American anthropologist* 90, 3: 568–79.

———. 1994. *Public faces, private lives. Community and individuality in south India*. Berkeley. University of California Press.

MINES, M. and V. GOURISHANKAR. 1990. Leadership and individuality in South Asia: The case of the south Indian big-man *The journal of South Asian studies* 49, 4: 761–86

OSELLA, F. and C. OSELLA 2000. Migration, money and masculinity in Kerala. *The journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, 1: 117–33

RAHEJA, G. 1996. Caste, colonialism, and the speech of the colonized. Entextualisation and disciplinary control in India. *American ethnologist* 23, 3: 494–513.

ROBINSON, F. 1983. Islam and Muslim society in South Asia. *Contributions to Indian sociology* (n.s.) 17, 2: 185–203.

SIMPSON, E. 2001. Merchants, 'saints' and sailors: The social production of Islamic reform in a port town in western India. Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of London.

STIRRAT, J. 1995 [1989]. Money, men and women. *In* J. Parry and M. Bloch, eds., *Money and the morality of exchange*, pp. 94–116. Cambridge· Cambridge University Press.

STRATHERN, M. 1992. Qualified value. The perspective of gift exchange. *In* C. Humphrey and S. Hugh-Jones, eds., *Barter, exchange and value: An anthropological approach*, pp. 169–91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

TURNER, B. 1974. *Weber and Islam: A critical study*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

VATUK, S. 1996. Identity and difference or equality and inequality in South Asian Muslim society. *In* C. Fuller, ed., *Caste today*, pp. 227–62. Del' ` Oxford University Press.

WERBNER, P. 1989. The ranking of brotherhoods. The dialectics of Muslim caste amongst overseas Pakistanis. *Contributions to Indian sociology* (n.s.) 23, 2: 285–315.

WERBNER, P. and H. BASU, eds. 1998. *Embodying charisma: Modernity, locality and the performance of emotion in Sufi cults*. London. Routledge.

Migration and the commoditisation of ritual: Sacrifice, spectacle and contestations in Kerala, India

Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella

This article discusses relationships between ritual change and out-migration in rural Kerala, south India, via ethnography of kuthiyottam, *a sacrifice of human blood standing metonymically for full human sacrifice. Migration—in particular to the Gulf—has accelerated ongoing processes of commoditisation of ritual practices. While this has led to an overall democratisation of rituals, it has also heightened anxieties about the authenticity of ritual performances, leading to widespread and tense debates about what is 'traditional' and what is not. While low caste or new-moneyed sponsors do not have either the symbolic or practical capital necessary to conduct 'traditional' rituals, their ritual naiveté allows for an acceleration of processes of introduction of new styles and innovations. Migrants are thus veritable innovators, introducing new aesthetic forms and a novel sense of religiosity. But oppositions between 'traditional' and 'new/modern', orthodoxy and heterodoxy, authentic and inauthentic, are clearly unsettled by the ritual performers themselves. here the emphasis is on creativity, aesthetic sense and the abilities to shift popular taste and introduce new artistic performances.*

Filippo Osella is at the University of Sussex, School of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies, Falmer, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 9SJ, UK.

Caroline Osella is at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H OXG, UK.

Acknowledgements: We have received generous financial support for various periods of fieldwork and writing-up from the period June 1990 to September 1996 from: the Economic and Social Research Council of Great Britain; the London School of Economics; the Leverhulme Trust; the Nuffield Foundation; and the Wenner-Gren Foundation. Fieldwork in Muscat in 2002 was supported by a grant from the Nuffield Foundation. We have been affiliated to the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, to the Madras Institute for Development Studies, Chennai, and to the Centre d'Études de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud, Paris. We would like to thank G. Tarabout, G. Colas, C.J. Fuller, K. Gardner and J.P. Mitchell, as well as participants in workshops in Sussex and Paris, for comments on earlier drafts.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

I
Introduction

In this article we consider some of the consequences of out-migration—in particular Gulf migration—upon Kerala society via ethnography of the Hindu ritual arena. This may not be an especially original focus—question of ritual change having long been central to anthropological and folkloric discussions of religious life—but it may be a privileged one. As the Comaroffs (1993) suggest in the African context,

> Firstly ... ritual ... will be, and frequently is, a site and a means of experimental practice .... [Secondly]: ritual, as an experimental technology intended to affect the flow of power in the universe, is an especially likely response to contradictions created and (literally) engendered by processes of social, material and cultural transformation, processes re-presented, rationalized and authorized in the name of modernity and its various alibis (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993: xxix–xxx).

We will discuss a specific ritual, *kuthiyottam*, a sacrifice of human blood standing metonymically in post-reform times for full human sacrifice, performed every year for and in front of the fierce (*ugra*) goddess Bhadrakali at the Puthenkulangara temple in south Kerala. Over the number of years in which we have been anthropologically involved—as recorders, participants and observers—with *kuthiyottam* (firstly in 1990 and 1991, and then again in 1995 and 1996), we have observed an expansion of the ritual outside its original catchment area; the participation of new sponsors (patrons/*jajmans*); a dramatic rise in the ritual's costs; and the introduction of different ritual styles by new groups of performers, with resulting controversy. Research into the ritual's history suggests some ways in which the story of *kuthiyottam* is enmeshed with the region's other stories: colonialism, Hindu reform, land redistribution and struggle, and—most latterly—migration to the Persian Gulf, the period of our primary focus here.

The sponsoring of *kuthiyottam*—an extremely expensive and public ritual—is usually taken up as an expression and public sanctioning of wealth and status. In 1986, *kuthiyottams* were offered by one Christian and six Nayars. In 1995, *kuthiyottams* were offered by six Nayars, one Ksatriya, three Izhavas, and one other (unidentified) community. Predictably, the appearance of sponsors from communities and families

previously (i.e., in the pre-reform period, the late 19th and early 20th centuries) excluded from the ritual (lower castes, 'new money' families) has led to attempts at exclusion or de-legitimation on the part of the local upper-caste elite, *savarna* Nayars. This is done via attempts to identify certain practices and styles as 'traditional', setting 'tradition' as a yardstick to judge the 'proper' performance of authentic rituals. Low caste or new-moneyed sponsors (generally Izhavas, an *avarna jati*) do not (in the eyes of the upper castes) have either the symbolic or practical capital—in terms of expertise, connections and knowledge—necessary to identify and hire the services of the best, most 'traditional' ritual performers, and hence to conduct 'traditional' *kuthiyottam*. Their ritual naiveté, putting them in a position where they rely heavily upon guidance by their hired performers, allows for an acceleration of processes of introduction of new styles and innovations. The local old-guard conservatives' oppositions between 'traditional' and 'new/modern', orthodoxy and heterodoxy, authentic and inauthentic, are clearly unsettled in conversations with performers themselves, be they from an established, high-caste 'traditional' troupe or from one of the burgeoning recently-formed, mixed caste (euphemism indicating that a troupe is including or composed of lower castes) troupe: here the emphasis is on creativity, aesthetic sense and the ability to shift popular taste and introduce new artistic performances.

II
Migration and social change

Migration to the Persian Gulf since the 1970s has brought to Kerala an intense period of social change. At least half the Gulf's Indian workers are from Kerala—1.4 million people in 1996 (Prakash 2000: 4534; see also Nair 1989: 343). From 1990–97, Gulf remittances amounted to $15 billion—a quarter of Kerala's GDP, rising to up to 50 per cent in areas of high Gulf migration (Kurien 1994: 765) and more than twice the sum given by the Central Government as budgetary support (Zachariah et al. 1999: 18ff). Kerala's historical legacy is a veritable 'culture of migration', traceable from pre-colonial times when Kerala was a fulcrum of world trade, both as a source of pepper and a meeting point of eastern and western trade routes. Persian Gulf Arabs and local Muslim traders were leading players (Chaudhuri 1990; Miller 1992: 80ff). When the colonial global economy reshaped Kerala, thousands of Malayalis moved to

plantations in South and Southeast Asia or to industrial centres in India (e.g., Bihar coal mines, Bombay textile factories [Joseph 1988]). Post-independence, internal migration continued (see Joseph 1988; Lewandowski 1980; Oberai et al. 1989; Zachariah 1968) and international migration turned towards West Asia.

In Valiyagramam, our main research site some 10 kilometres from Puthenkulangara temple, a survey of primary occupations of 453 men from two neighbourhoods conducted between 1989 and 1995 (see Osella and Osella 2000a) shows that a quarter of them were—or had been—migrants, half of them to the Gulf, a figure typical of the wider area as a whole. At the turn of the 20th century, newly converted Christians and low status Izhavas were migrating to colonial plantations as coolies, supervisors and clerks; during the Second World War men from forward communities—Nayars and Christians—left to join the army. By the 1950s new national employment opportunities opened up for villagers. Educated people were able to take up employment in the administrative service and nationalised industries of newly independent India; many clerks and typists went to the cities; some joined the railways. Since the early 1960s, villagers with technical training—electricians, welders, fitters, plumbers—have found employment in the various industrial areas of north India, notably Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Gujarat. Holding relatively well-paid, permanent, skilled/technical employment, these migrants and their families tend to be settled, maintaining only sporadic contact with their natal villages. While many express the desire and intention to return to Valiyagramam on retirement, high costs of land and living in Kerala now make return extremely difficult.[1]

In the last twenty-five years, however, migration in Valiyagramam has been dominated by the Gulf and, fitting a Kerala-wide profile, first-time migrants have been typically young, male, un-/low-skilled and unmarried (Gulati 1983: 2218; Matthew and Nair 1978; Nair 1994; Prakash 1978). Due to laws preventing naturalisation of migrants and linking visas to work contracts, for the majority—that is, excluding a few professionals—migration consists of a series of stretches in the Gulf alternating

[1] A considerable number of poor, low status migrants are also working in various industrial centres and cities in north India, mostly as unskilled and low-paid labourers in places such as Gujarat's prawn factories or tyre reconditioning workshops in Mumbai and Pune. These jobs are mainly seasonal, with bad working conditions and low pay, and living conditions are generally worse than those enjoyed in the village. Children and wives usually stay behind, moving between in-laws and the natal family

with periods in the village between contracts. Given the short-term nature of most Gulf jobs and, since 1995, the promulgation in some countries of laws linking residence visas for dependents to the migrant's job and income, migrants' families are usually left behind. A substantial part of earnings are remitted regularly or brought back as savings at the end of the migration period.

A commodified economy and conspicuous consumption practices have developed as integral features of Kerala's long-term 'culture of migration', becoming a lynchpin of social distinction and a key tool in family strategies oriented towards upward social mobility and identity fashioning (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; c.f. Gell 1988; Miller 1995). Remittances are spent on daily household consumption, construction and repair of buildings, acquisition of land, repayment of debts, life-cycle rituals and education (see Nambiar 1997: 66; Osella and Osella 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Zachariah et al. 1999: 19). Within Kerala, migrants are the vanguard of conspicuous consumption and modernity, their households characterised by a wide range of goods and high consumption levels.[2]

Migrants' conspicuous consumption and reluctance to invest in productive capacity has been taken by the government and developers as indicating migration's boom and bust nature: generating high degrees of dependency on revenues from an unreliable international labour market instead of fostering long-term development through productive investments. Migration opportunities and remittances are now less than in the 1980s boom years, and an alleged slowdown in Gulf migration leads some to predict a mass return of the majority of migrants over the next few years (Panikkar 1989; Prakash 2000; Radhakrishnan 1989). Yet the opposition between 'bad' consumption and 'good' productive investments obscures an often blurred distinction between consumption and investment expenditure. Spending on education, health and housing has created employment in the tertiary sector, reducing government expenditure on infrastructure, subsidies and services (Harilal and Joseph 2000; cf. Gmelch 1980; Russell 1992). These economic spin-offs have, however, largely been in sectors dominated by the middle class. The manual labouring classes have been left out of these developments, leading to a sharpening of inequalities and their visibility, and a change in the nature of inequality as it is now materialised within a globalised material culture (Osella and Osella 1999, 2000b; cf. Carrier and Heyman 1997).

[2] For example, 54 per cent of migrant households own a television, against 34 per cent amongst non-migrants (Zachariah et al. 2000).

By the chance it offers of rapid and vast accumulation—well above internal migration's potentials—Gulf migration has accelerated processes of social change and differentiation. Unlike those who migrate to industrial or metropolitan centres in India (see, e.g., Parry, this volume), Gulf migrants do not settle away from home but must sooner or later return, where new-found wealth may dramatically alter their status and relationships with others, offering chances to forge new—individual and collective—identities. As we will see in the following pages, the (public) ritual/religious domain has been central to migrants' strategic conversion of economic capital into prestige and status, becoming one of the privileged grounds for negotiations, assertions and contestations of social position built upon Gulf-earned money.

III
Violence and power

Blood sacrifices to powerful and 'violent' (*ugra, bhaiyankara*) forms of the goddess (usually chickens or 'vegetarian' substitutes—cucumbers) are commonplace throughout south India. Mock human sacrifices are similarly not limited to Kerala itself but are found in various forms, such as 'hook-swinging' in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka (see, e.g., Oddie 1995; Obeyesekere 1984, 1990 for Sri Lanka; cf. Padel 1995 for a discussion of human sacrifice in colonial India). *Kuthiyottam* itself has been reported in parts of Tamil Nadu (Dumont 1986: 429–30; Reiniche 1979: 176) and southern Kerala (Tarabout 1986: 332–35; see also Mateer 1870: 221–22, 1883: 92–93; Thurston 1906: 63), while we have seen it performed in several smaller temples throughout our fieldwork area (central Travancore). What makes *kuthiyottam* at Puthenkulangara particularly significant is the scale of the ritual, the fame of the songs associated with the sacrifice, the reputation of the performers and—for devotees—the great powers of Puthenkulangara Amma.

Up until the end of the 19th century, Puthenkulangara temple belonged to four related Nayar families—Kerala's traditional upper-caste elite—living in proximity to the temple; *kuthiyottam* was their sole prerogative. Low caste villagers living alongside these four Nayar families were excluded from access to the temple and could not conduct *kuthiyottam*; Izhavas—low caste 'toddy-tappers'—had the right, however, to perform another mock human sacrifice—*tukkam tullal*, hook-swinging—on the day after the conclusion of *kuthiyottam*. When the administration of the temple was taken over by the Travancore Devaswom Board (cf. Tarabout

1997: 131–35), the four original families lost some of their original ritual rights and the temple's ritual constituency became extended from four to thirteen neighbourhoods.

At the turn of the 20th century, the temple and its festival became the centre of bitter and at times violent disputes between Nayars and low caste Izhavas. Spearheaded by a wealthy and powerful local elite—those same families which led the Izhava reform movement across Kerala—and following a firework accident during the hook-swinging festival (in which many people died, including a prominent member of one of these elite families), Izhavas stopped performing *tukkam tullal*, a ritual generally stigmatised as low caste.[3] Along with this withdrawal, Izhavas boosted their claims to participation in mainstream ritual activities and access to the temple via construction (financed by one of the local wealthy Izhava families) of a 'feeding hall' within the temple premises, and a large *mandapam* facing the main shrine from which to take *darshan* of Bhadrakali in a style appropriate to this family's economic status. This (still standing) *mandapam* was, of course, constructed outside the temple's main boundary wall and just beyond the temple's untouchability boundaries. Eventually, in 1936, following the promulgation of temple entry legislation and long state-wide campaigns against caste discrimination, all low caste villagers gained full access to the temple and Izhavas were then able—as members of a newly-constituted modern inclusive Hindu 'public'—to claim full rights to act as sponsors of the more prestigious blood sacrifice, the *kuthiyottam* (Osella and Osella 2000a).

Reconstructing the more recent history of the temple from personal recollections, it appears that, given the high costs involved in the sponsoring of the sacrifice, *kuthiyottam* continued post-1936 to remain the privilege of the local Nayar elite, with the exception of a handful of wealthy Izhava families. But throughout the 1960s the temple declined in popularity, to the extent that in 1972 the management committee decided to conduct a *kodiarchana*, a Vedic ritual involving twenty-eight Brahmins and allegedly costing one crore (ten million) rupees, to relaunch the temple. The decline was part of a generalised decline in Kerala temple life at the time, against a background of severe political unrest. From the late 1950s to the early 1970s, rural Kerala, including the Puthenkulangara area, was the site of widespread mobilisations of tenants and landless labourers for the implementation of land reforms, often violently opposed

[3] Nowadays, many Izhavas (including members of the caste reform movement and local well-known high-status Izhava families) deny that their community had ever participated in *tukkam*.

by landowners and leading to a polarisation of political interests and allegiances. During the annual temple festival, in particular on the evening of Khumba Bharani when the competitive parade and presentation of *kettukazhcha*—thirteen 20 metres high decorated wooden structures mounted on wheels and pulled by devotees from the thirteen *karas*—would attract crowds of thousands, political tensions regularly led to the eruption of fighting, often fuelled by underlying caste conflicts, and eventually forcing a temporary suspension of the festival and its re-introduction only under heavy police presence.

The 1972 relaunch of Puthenkulangara temple, therefore, takes place at a time when the local Nayar community, represented and led by a number of wealthy landowning families, has clearly aligned itself with anti-union and anti-Communist politics.[4] Izhavas and other *avarna jatis*, overwhelmingly tenants or landless labourers, were at the time grouped on the opposing side, involved in union and communist organisations. The temple, with its festival and associated rituals, including *kuthiyottam*, became post-1972 the focus of a conscious effort to entrench and objectify a generalised opposition to left-wing policies and social reforms into a 'traditionalist' or 'conservative' identity expressed through the defence and continuation of local 'ritual traditions'. As in other temples in central Travancore, at the centre of this 'traditionalist' turn stands the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), whose militants and sympathisers have over the years taken on a prominent role in the running of the temple and its festival. But the RSS's ostensible project of a unified Hindu community upholding its 'religious tradition' by coming together for the worship of Puthenkulangara Amma is just one of the many interests which continue to be played out in temple politics (cf. Chirayankandath 1998: 212ff).

Some of the neighbourhood (*kara*) committees which organise parts of the annual festival (such as the construction of the *kettukazhcha*, local processions to the temple and 'receptions' for the goddess when she goes out to visit the neighbourhoods) remain completely Nayar-dominated and exclude active (or equal) participation of other communities—a stance causing increasing friction with the RSS. Others are more heterogeneous or open. At the same time, the Devaswom Board and its local government employees—who run the daily activities of the temple and are continually charged with theft and corruption—are often openly at loggerheads with these local voluntary temple committees.

[4] We note the (well-known to the point of over-representation) exception of some Namboodiris and Nayars, stereotypically, disgruntled and disinherited younger sons, who were instrumental in setting up and leading Kerala's left movements.

Finally, the prestige which is still attached to taking prominent positions in public ritual/religious activities continues to fuel new or old rivalries between particular families and communities competing for status (Osella and Osella 2000a: 154ff).

Since the 1970s the fame of Puthenkulangara Amma has continued to grow steadily, with thousands of devotees nowadays taking part in her annual festival, with the temple drastically increasing its income through devotees' donations, and with *kuthiyottam* establishing itself as the region's most powerful and prestigious individual offering to the goddess. These developments need to be understood within the context of a generalised renewal of interest and participation in religious activities throughout the area, as in Kerala at large, a trend at whose centre stand Gulf migrants and their families. After the years of violent conflict and decline, Kerala's public religious life again began to expand from the mid-1970s. In the last fifteen years there has been a proliferation of temples (and churches) and rituals which specialise in assisting Gulf migration and promoting financial success, as well as offering solutions to the problems created by migration itself: failure to receive remittances or get migration loan repaid; excessive alcohol consumption by Gulf returnees; marital infidelity of migrants and their stay-behind spouses; envy from neighbours and friends, and so on (see Tarabout 1997; Osella and Osella 2000a).

Writing about Bangladeshi migrants, Katy Gardner suggests that 'The culture of migration is interwoven with the culture of miracles ... people invest migration with the power to transform, and are prepared to risk everything to gain access to it ...' (1995: 262). As we have discussed elsewhere, Kerala temple committees have been quick to react to this migration-led 'consumer' demand by introducing, for example, long-distance bookings—by fax or e-mail—for *nercha* (temple offerings), or by organising the performance of obscure Vedic rituals (for example, a 1994 *yagna* organised at a local Shiva temple which on the last day attracted more than 25,000 people); local Brahmins have become willing to perform hitherto relatively uncommon *homams* (fire sacrifices, especially to Ganapathi) in the house of whoever is able to afford the costs, regardless of caste status; and some Brahmins have opened up their family temples to the public, cashing in on the ritual reputation they hold. Astrologers, sorcerers (*mandravadi*), Ammas, Tantris and ritual specialists in general have all been able to exploit this burgeoning religious market. We therefore move from Gardner's specific assertion that migration is especially entwined with the miraculous and towards the more general assertion set out in our introduction that periods of rapid social change lead to

upsurges in ritual activity. Finally we add to this the insight that ritual is becoming commoditised as part of Kerala's general post-Gulf migration drive towards increasing commoditisation and the search to objectify identities via consumption.[5]

Successful Gulf migrant returnees often invest substantial sums of money in becoming patrons of religious activities, a culturally approved way of transforming wealth into political power and social status. Amid all the innovation and expansion, we simultaneously also see moves towards 'orthodoxy' or conservatism. Gulf-returnees have been instrumental in the renovation of many family temples and lineage associations—the latter now also coupling as welfare associations and investment fora—which had collapsed following the 1930s reforms of the matrilineal inheritance system and subsequent partition of ancestral joint properties. Among those who have no temple to renovate, old simple ancestor shrines, consisting of one stone at the edge of the compound, have been turned into full-fledged family temples with puranic deities. By donating money to local temples and sponsoring public festivals, Gulf migrants have also been able to take on positions of responsibility in the management committees of mainstream temples, often disrupting existing power structures based either on lineage seniority or customary ritual rights. Public religious activities—especially temple festivals—are therefore often local sites of struggles for precedence, prestige and status through which individual and collective/caste projects of social mobility are articulated and given expression (Osella and Osella 2000a: 154ff).

We now turn to a composite and brief description of what *kuthiyottam* entails in the post-1980s.

IV
Kuthiyottam

Kuthiyottam—the literal meaning of which is stabbing and running—is a mock human sacrifice performed for the goddess Bhadrakali as part of the Puthenkulangara's annual temple festival. Local patrons from the

[5] We should clarify that such modes of analysis do not signal in any way a return to an anthropological moment of oversimplified and over-confident crude materialist readings of such magical activities. Consider, for example, Apter's attempt to link the development of the cocoa economy in Yorubaland with an upsurge in witch-finding. He claims that, 'The Antiga witch-finding movement should be re-analysed; not as a 'symptom' of structural change, but as a drama which sought to comprehend and control it' (1993. 120).

thirteen neighbourhoods attached to the temple vow to sponsor the offering of a costly human blood sacrifice to the goddess, a ritual undertaking demanding months of preparation and costing many thousands of rupees.

Kuthiyottam begins with several days of preparation at the sponsor's home, carried out under instructions by the hired all-male semi-professional troupe who are expert in *kuthiyottam* and will act simultaneously as performers (singers and dancers) and ritual specialists, under the leadership of a senior male expert (*asan*). On Sivaratri a large canopy is erected in the courtyard of the sponsor's home and a temporary shrine to Bhadrakali constructed. From this day, the sponsor, his family and all the performers should observe *vratam* (abstinence—from meat, liquor, sex and so on). Two 'pure', i.e., pre-pubescent boys, are brought to the house and given new clothes and haircuts, and temporarily 'adopted'. Everyone is clear that the two boys—who themselves are of course acting as substitutes for the sacrifier himself—should be the sons of the sponsor, but in practice (partly because the boys, after the sacrifice, are ritually dead and hence inauspicious) sponsors temporarily 'adopt' a couple of children, usually from poor, low-caste labouring families. The boys live in the home of the sponsor for the duration of *kuthiyottam* and are treated as members of the family. Under the canopy and before the shrine, in front of a large crowd, the two boys have six to seven nights in which to learn the four different dance steps which they will eventually have to perform in front of Bhadrakali at the temple before the conclusion of the sacrifice. The dance steps are performed to the accompaniment of four different songs praising the goddess and recounting her fight against the demons. Teaching the dance is the job of the hired troupe, who also conduct the sacrifice itself—the skin piercing on the final day—and procure the two boys for the sponsor.

The nights of preparation are a public occasion on an enormous scale—far bigger than a wedding—attracting a large number of the sponsor's relatives, friends and neighbours. Instruction of the boys occupies only a small part of the evening—half an hour at the beginning and the end of each night's performance. For the rest of the night—around four hours—the performers/ritual specialists present their troupe's particular repertoire of songs and dances. Nobody who appears at the house is turned away, while everyone attending is offered hot drinks, betel nut and cigarettes and substantial hot snacks (which should be different every night). No expense should be spared, and all comers should receive lavish hospitality. To run out of *sambar* or *idli* would be a disaster: householders must be ready to prepare and serve food to a minimum of 200 guests a night.

Many informants made explicit reference to the great sacrifice of Daksa (referred to as the goddess' father and Shiva's father-in-law).

After the days of practice comes one day's rest, and early on the morning of the following day, the performing troupe dress the two boys up as 'kings', with mock gold crowns and bangles, lavish make-up, banana leaves and red silk waist-cloths, and so on. They are taken in front of the goddess' temporary house shrine and, in front of a large crowd, their sides are pierced by the *asan* with a silver thread. Having performed their four dance steps in front of the goddess at the house, the two boys are then taken out, hands carefully raised to avoid touching the silver threads, in a huge procession along the major roads to Puthenkulangara temple. Processions are led by the sponsor and his family and include friends and neighbours as well as caparisoned elephants, temple drummers, musicians and various troupes performing ritual/religious and mimetic arts (e.g., peacock dancers; floats with religious tableaux). Throughout the procession, which might take two to four hours to reach Puthenkulangara temple along a route several kilometres long, some of the performing troupe sing songs to the goddess through a portable P.A. system mounted on a lorry; others walk with the boys, protecting them from the crush and ensuring they come to no harm. Along the way, the procession stops in front of every temple or shrine they pass for the two boys, together with their instructors, to perform the four basic dance steps.

After several hours the temple comes in sight, with a massive crowd in and around it and with *kuthiyottams* from several directions converging upon it. Processions form queues to get in, whereupon the boys are taken to the front of the entrance of the main shrine, watched by thousands of devotees. Here, after the performance of the four dance steps, the *asan* swiftly removes the bloody threads from the boys' bodies and offers them to the goddess—the boys sometimes faint at this point, from emotional exhaustion rather than pain. They are then carried away to be bandaged. Finally, all participants in the procession return to the sponsor's home where they are offered a full vegetarian feast meal. On the following day, the hectic days of *kuthiyottam* draw to a close with the sponsor breaking the *vratam* abstinence by offering a non-vegetarian meal (accompanied by alcohol for the menfolk) to the performers/ritual specialists and all those who have helped to organise and conduct the sacrifice. At this meal, the performers and the two boys are presented with gifts and payment for their services. The boys are returned—now ritually dead—to their parents.

V
Establishing authenticity and drawing a good crowd

From the point of view of those who sponsor *kuthiyottam*, the sacrifice has two dimensions. The first is fear of retribution from the goddess. People (generally men, occasionally senior women) initially decide to offer *kuthiyottam* as a massive act of devotion in order to obtain a specific boon from the deity, often in times of particular distress or necessity, the performance itself being delayed until the particular desired positive result has been obtained, thereby being the closure of a bargain made. But in most cases, given the high costs entailed, the promised *kuthiyottam* is not performed immediately after a good result is obtained, but tends to be postponed until such time as things begin to go wrong in the devotee's life. Consulting an astrologer will confirm that the goddess, displeased at not having received what she had been promised, is beginning to exact her revenge: Bhadrakali is famed for never having failed to help her devotees and for being extraordinarily powerful, but she is also quick tempered and vengeful with those who break vows made to her. At this point, delays are no longer possible and a *kuthiyottam* is organised.

Ramachandran, a 55-year-old Izhava Gulf returnee, sponsored a *kuthiyottam* in 1995. Ramachandran had been in Qatar for seventeen years—together with his wife, two daughters and a son-in-law—and is in the process of resettling in Kerala for good. In Qatar he worked first as a government employee—as a hospital compounder according to his Nayar neighbours—and was later in a computer firm, making more than Rs 20,000 per month, but now he wants 'just to sit home enjoying the money'. When we first met, Ramachandran told us that he had decided to return because 'there is no one to look after our properties here and everyone was taking advantage of that'. But as we got to know him better, by going every night to his house to participate in his *kuthiyottam* preparations, he revealed that in fact he had decided to return because one of his two daughters had very bad health: high blood pressure, 'sugar complaints' and 'uterus troubles'. She had been discharged from hospital in order to attend the *kuthiyottam*. Ramachandran recounted that he had promised to sponsor a *kuthiyottam* because, 'When I went to the Gulf there was no one there to help me. I went there with a tourist visa and I had no job. But I did a *nercha* [vow] to Puthenkulangara Amma and since then everything went well: first, I found a government job; then things got better and better.' But it was only when his daughter became

seriously ill that Ramachandran finally decided to organise the promised *kuthiyottam* at a cost, in 1995, of Rs 400,000.

Throughout the unfolding of the various phases of *kuthiyottam*, particular efforts must be made to ensure that the goddess is 'satisfied' (*thripthi*) with the sacrifice. An astrologer, consulted at various stages during the ritual, will establish whether the goddess is present during the *kuthiyottam* and if she is pleased with the way it has been conducted, or whether she has not been satisfied and the sacrifice has to be done again. But sponsors, audience and performers are also involved in this process of establishing the success of the sacrifice, keen to pick up and discuss various incidents—a downpour of rain, an accident to the sponsor or his family, a large or small attendance on the preparatory nights—as good or bad omens which indicate Bhadrakali's pleasure or displeasure. Most commonly the goddess herself appears at some point during the *kuthiyottam*, usually disguised as an old beggar woman, to test the 'sincerity' and devotion of the sponsors. In stories we have heard at all the *kuthiyottams* we have attended and from all the people we talked to, an old woman in tattered clothes arrives at the house of the sponsor demanding either food or water. She is generally recognised by women in the sponsor's house, her specific requests are met, and she—like the other guests—is offered hospitality, after which she disappears, saying, 'yes, I am satisfied now'.

The intentions of the sponsor and family are also publicly evaluated: 'That family's one was not good', asserted one villager about a recently returned migrant's performance, 'because the women were wearing make-up and dressed too flashy, concentrating on their appearance instead of seeing properly to the food served to guests'. Another commented: 'the women were too *proud*, wearing too much jewellery and trying to draw attention to themselves instead of to the goddess. This is very bad!' Discussions like this highlight some general areas of consent on what should be the criteria for a successful *kuthiyottam*. It should be organised without thinking of costs, a total sacrifice whereby the sponsor should be prepared to offer everything he owns, first of all his own son/s and then a considerable portion of his wealth;[6] it should be conducted not for ostentation but as an act of pure devotion, showing humility and total submission to the goddess; songs and dances should be performed according to certain established rhythms and forms. Such criteria are employed in gossip to evaluate the propriety of sponsors' intentions and behaviour.

[6] 'A sponsor must be prepared to face anything,' one troupe leader advised.

Particularly vulnerable to criticism are those identified as new-moneyed/*avarna* and hence outside the 'usual' circle of *kuthiyottam* patronage. These newcomers are invariably accused by the high-caste conservatives who dominate local *kara* and temple community life of being too 'flashy', much too concerned with showing off their wealth and making a reputation, lacking humility, respect and devotion to the goddess. In 1995 the *kuthiyottam* of Vijayamohan—an Izhava who has been living with his family in the United Arab Emirates for the last eighteen years and has just returned to his brother's wife's house to sponsor the sacrifice—drew unmitigated negative comments from his Nayar neighbours. While Vijayamohan and his wife greeted visitors 'modestly' dressed—husband wearing a *khadi* shirt and *khadi* waist-cloth, wife wearing a plain cotton *saree*—they were reproached for wearing ostentatious jewellery—husband donning three thick gold chains around his neck, and wife wearing a number of thick, diamond encrusted gold bangles on each wrist. The house, moreover, was adorned not only with the usual decorations and lights, but also with a large flashing neon sign reading 'Vijayamohan *kuthiyottam*' mounted next to the outline of an illuminated chariot driven by Lord Krishna rendered in twinkling multicoloured bulbs. Not only did the Nayars make a big joke (implying Vijayamohan's ignorance) out of Arjuna's absence from the chariot, but commented animatedly about 'the absence of *bhakti*', arguing that 'in the past people were terrified that anything would go wrong, displeasing the goddess, while nowadays *kuthiyottam* is only a status display of sponsors.'

Arguments about the need for humility tend to obscure another important dimension of *kuthiyottam*: as a public event which establishes and objectifies the sponsor's status and reputation as a patron/big-man. This occurs on several levels and has a clear competitive dimension. First, as we have already mentioned, *kuthiyottam* is generally recognised as an extremely expensive ritual—a minimum of Rs 150,000 was needed in the early 1990s—and to undertake sponsorship is a clear demonstration of personal wealth. We calculate that by the late 1990s, the escalating cost (currently estimated by one *asan* at between Rs 400,000–700,000) means that anyone who was not a migrant and earning in foreign currency was likely to find *kuthiyottam* prohibitively expensive. We have seen minimum expenditure for successful sponsorship rise from less than Rs 100,000 when we first saw the festival in 1990 to double that figure. From our lists of sponsors, in 1995, eight out of eleven were employed outside Kerala (mostly in the Gulf), at high levels (for instance, as

engineers); in 1996, almost all were migrants, and one a Mumbai businessman. The high-caste small-time government officials and landowners who sponsored *kuthiyottams* up to the 1960s are progressively being elbowed out. As one performance troupe leader remarked in 1996, 'A poor man cannot do this. The minimum for a very small one is Rs 200,000; the most expensive one this year cost Rs 700,000.'[7] Preparation and organisation also require good connections—for example, in order to hire a reputed troupe of performers—and a great deal of support from relatives, friends and neighbours—to cook and serve food each night to hundreds of guests. Through the ability to mobilise extensive webs of patronage, sponsors publicly assert their reputation as 'big-men', a reputation augmented by the size of the crowd turning up each night to enjoy the singing and dancing, and by the number of invited VIPs spotted among the crowd. The overall behaviour of the sponsor and his family during the *kuthiyottam*—dress, type of food served, how they entertain guests and performers—is also 'read' as an indication of cultural competence and sophistication. A successful sacrifice publicly demonstrates the spiritual worthiness of the sponsor whose offerings are accepted by and please the goddess, establishing him as a major devotee. The final procession from the house of the sponsor to the temple is not only witnessed by thousands of people, but is also conducted in competition with other local *kuthiyottams*. Here the sponsor will try to attract the largest possible number of people, outdoing other processions not only in size, but also in the number of 'items'—elephants, musicians, performers of ritual arts, etc.—brought to the temple. Particular effort is put into arriving at the temple around noon, when the largest crowd is present, and to not losing precedence—and hence face—by having to queue to get in to the main shrine behind the other processions. Finally, during preparation nights, local people stroll around the neighbourhood and visit a number of *kuthiyottams*, comparing and evaluating the style and scale of each event. Sponsors may also visit each other's functions in order to evaluate the competition, making hasty changes to their programme in order to lure additional spectators. Successful, large scale *kuthiyottams* are remembered—nowadays they are invariably recorded on video—and talked about for a long time.[8]

[7] The latter was offered by a Christian businessman said to have been involved with underworld dons and to be giving thanks for having narrowly escaped prosecution by the police.

[8] On the last night before the procession, the performing troupe will sing a song praising the sponsor (*poli pathu*). The text of one of these songs reads as follows. '...

We suggest that sponsors experience a tension between two contradictory demands, both requiring public performance and both subject to scrutiny and evaluation. In order to please the goddess, the essence of performance is sacrifice and spectacle, requiring lavishness. And yet the ethos of this lavish performance is that it be performed in a humble spirit of *bhakti*. Two other dimensions of *kuthiyottam*, as an act of self-interested fearful devotion and as a public objectification of wealth, status and personal power, necessarily and clearly impinge on each other and cannot be separated. Eventually, the idea of staging a low-key, small *kuthiyottam* makes neither cultural nor ritual sense: a well-attended *kuthiyottam* ending with a large procession accompanied by many elephants, musicians, floats, etc., will certainly satisfy the goddess. The fact that a particular *kuthiyottam* has attracted large crowds and outshone others is an obvious augur that the sacrifice has gone well and the goddess is pleased. By vowing to offer *kuthiyottam*, sponsors set themselves on an extremely dangerous path which can end up in a double disaster—displeasing the goddess and public humiliation—or lead to divine blessings as well as public recognition and fame. One unlucky liquor contractor (new money, low caste and despised occupation) had to offer *kuthiyottam* three times before being assured (by astrologers and popular opinion) that it had gone well and therefore pleased the goddess.

On the other hand, the most successful *kuthiyottams* were reputed to be those sponsored by a rich Mumbai-resident Christian—a haulage contractor for some, a 'Gulf smuggler' according to others. In 1991 he had first organised the sacrifice from a Nayar friend's house—the church having allegedly forbidden him to conduct it in his own ancestral house under threat of excommunication. When we attended, he had hired two troupes of ritual specialists who were performing simultaneously on two different stages, and was offering a quadruple *kuthiyottam*. Every night four makeshift kitchens provided food for the hundreds of people who came to attend the performance, including all the VIPs and VVIPs of the area (members of the local assembly and the parliament, police commissioners, civil servants, etc.). On the last day, the Christian sponsor's procession was the most spectacular and attracted the largest following. It included thirty decorated umbrellas; *kathakali* heroes and deities'

The luckiest man in the world organises this festival, he is an *uttamen*, the best. The *greehanayagam* [householder] is a lucky man indeed. He does Bhadrakali *vazhipadu* [ritual offering] of *kuthiyottam*. Sri Bhadra's most important thing is *kuthiyottam*; to get famous we pray ....'

figures; seven different temple arts (including two different groups of musicians); and four elephants.

VI
Migrants, tradition and innovation

The increased popularity of *kuthiyottam* can now be related to Gulf migration in a number of ways. The post-1970s history of Gulf migration has made it plain to would-be migrants, generating as it did wealth to deserving and undeserving alike (i.e., to whoever had the chance to go to the Gulf at a time of plenty), that hard work and thrift are not enough and that imponderables like luck or supernatural force are eventually the only things which can account for fortune's uneven distribution. It is no surprise to find here an increased attraction towards goddesses like Puthenkulangara Amma, vengeful and potentially dangerous, and yet so powerful as to fulfil all devotees' wishes.

Migrants spend many years—often all their working lives—away from home, returning only for short visits every couple of years. In most cases families are separated for long periods and even those few professionals who take families to the Gulf usually send them back to Kerala once the children reach secondary school age. During our recent visit to Muscat, Tony Fernandes—a Christian accountant who has been working in the Gulf for more than 15 years—complained to us that, '... after so many years abroad you go back and you are nothing, you have no place any more in the community. All my classmates are away, we are all scattered. A young new generation has come up who don't even know who we all are. They are running the show and have taken up all [temple and church] positions. And I feel this although I go back every year ...'. For migrants planning an eventual return home, participation and sponsoring of public festivals is a means of showing commitment to the village, of maintaining a tangible and continuous presence in their place of origin while re-forging relationships with family, friends and clients (cf. Mills 1999: 139).[9] At the same time, festivals like *kuthiyottam* offer to new-moneyed Gulf returnees a public stage from which to establish reputation and status as well as the possibility of asserting claims to power and precedence vis-á-vis local elites (see F. Osella 1993; Tarabout 1997; Osella and Osella 2000a).

[9] Relationships are also maintained via giving gifts brought from the Gulf (see Osella and Osella 1996, 2000b).

But there is an important added dimension: as explained earlier, *kuthiyottam* has been redefined as a 'traditional' ritual offering and as specifically (*savarna*) Nayar. Hence, in the context of Kerala, it is seen as an upper caste means of expressing devotion and asserting prestige. Processes of 'traditionalisation' of the sacrifice, accompanied by political shifts within the local Nayar community towards RSS Hindu revivalism, find expression in a number of pamphlets published by the temple's management committee, by devotional associations and by some devotees. These connect the temple's and *kuthiyottam*'s histories on the one hand to mainstream Hinduism and on the other to the histories of a few local high status Nayar families. One Nayar sponsor remarked, commenting on recent changes, that: 'only us Nayars (and above) have the finances and achievements [status] to do it [*kuthiyottam*] and I only remember one Izhava family doing *kuthiyottam* in the past. Before, all troupes were Nayars, now some are mixed, but we [Nayars] don't like it and don't call them'.

The association of *kuthiyottam* with a specific upper-caste ritual tradition and to political conservatism—together with its popularisation through radio, television and music cassettes—explains recent expansion among conservative Nayars beyond its usual geographical constituency. In Valiyagramam, for example, during our first fieldwork between 1989 and 1991, villagers had only heard of or seen the final *kuthiyottam* processions, with only a handful of people who had affinal relations in Puthenkulangara having ever attended the whole ritual. But by 1994 *kuthiyottam* music was played in most family and public temple festivals—either through music cassettes or by live performances of *kuthiyottam* troupes. Between 1993 and 1996 three different local Nayar families—all being branches of the village's erstwhile landed elite (see Osella 1993)—had sponsored the sacrifice, even though the final day entailed an exhausting, 10 kilometre-long procession.

Generalised references to 'tradition' are employed to evaluate the organisation of specific *kuthiyottams*, the endeavour of the sponsor and the performance of the troupes of ritual specialists. We have already seen that newcomers become the target of criticism which, by questioning their devotion and cultural competence, seek to de-legitimise their participation and claims to status. That these newcomers are not just new-moneyed Gulf returnees but also often low caste (*avarna*) Izhavas suggests that 'traditionalisation' of *kuthiyottam* also has the specific scope of keeping at bay the emergence of a new, potentially threatening, non-upper caste middle class.

Izhava sponsors cannot of course either justify their participation or claim status entitlement by reference to 'tradition': in the old 19th century system they were barred from taking part in *kuthiyottam* and could only offer the less prestigious 'hook-swinging sacrifice'. Ramachandran candidly admitted to us that he did not know much about *kuthiyottam*: 'on the final day [procession and sacrificial offering] people will tell me what to do. Some rituals are there but I don't know what exactly.'[10] What Izhava upcomers do is to answer criticism by arguing that the very category of 'tradition' is spurious. They claim that Puthenkulangara temple is not in fact as old as conservative propaganda suggests (1,200 years old) and that it was actually built during the last 500 years. Moreover, they claim that it was migrant manual labourers who introduced what is now the main feature of the entire festival, the presentation of *kettukazhcha*—twenty metre-high wooden structures—to the goddess. They tell the story that in the middle of the 19th century, while working as corveé labour for the construction of the Kollam-Chavara canal—some 60 kilometres south of Puthenkulangara—labourers saw *kettukazhcha* being prepared by local people. They made a vow that if Bhadrakali helped them finish their work and return to Puthenkulangara in time for her annual festival, they would build *kettukazhcha* for her.

Here, not only are Izhavas suggesting that *kuthiyottam* and its associate rituals cannot be that ancient—some suggesting that the festival as it now exists was introduced some fifty years ago from a neighbouring area—but that continuous innovations and borrowings from the outside lie at the core of religious life. One villager recalled that in his memory, there had always been *kettukazhchas*, but that it was only ten to fifteen years ago that people had begun to offer them on two days instead of one. From this perspective, the introduction of bright neon-light decorations on the house of the sponsor, hiring of one of the much-criticised new troupes of performers with their film-style songs and dances, or being generally a touch too 'flashy' (*jada, chettu*), are not abominations—as the 'traditionalists' would have it—but expressions of new aesthetic forms and values which modify and enrich existing ritual practices and make valid contributions to what is intended to be a goddess-pleasing spectacle. As we watched a video of one *kuthiyottam* with the sponsor in his home, he commented that the majority of temple arts hired for the

[10] Ramachandran's ignorance stands in contrast to the knowledge of some Nayar sponsors, such as D. Pillai, whose *kuthiyottam* we followed in 1990. During the final feast after the conclusion of the sacrifice, D. Pillai announced that he had written his own *kuthiyottam* song and began to sing it to a somewhat bewildered audience

final procession were either Tamil or had a Tamil origin. Izhava newcomers are trying to shift debates about participation in *kuthiyottam* from questions over caste status precedence—according to which only Nayars would be legitimate sponsors—to a straightforward issue of class, where cash alone determines the right to sponsorship, as well as the scale and style of presentations to the goddess.

Meanwhile, in Valiyagramam, migrants—here Nayar migrants to metropolitan India—were bringing an understanding of and a relationship to *kuthiyottam* strongly influenced by urban—and substantially modern—forms of Hinduism. Laxmiamma belongs to one of the old land-owning Nayar families in the village and, together with her husband, in 1993 sponsored Valiyagramam's first ever *kuthiyottam*. She works as a staff nurse in Ahmedabad, in a hospital belonging to a thermal power corporation, the same company for which her husband works as a personnel manager. Having lived away for twenty-five years—in Benares, Punjab, Delhi and Ahmedabad—they were preparing to return to Valiyagramam following her husband's recent posting to a newly built nearby power station. Talking in fluent English, Laxmiamma explained that after marriage she could not get pregnant and after many clinical tests was told that she would never be able to have children. But while in Delhi she went to an astrologer and was told that she would either conceive by 1988 or not at all. 'Although I am a nurse, I was totally disillusioned with the hospital,' Laxmiamma told us:

> I thought 'I must have a child and I will have it'. So I began to turn my energies towards spiritual methods, meditating daily on Lord Krishna and letting all my mind-power concentrate on the [reproductive] organs. Although I've never had a strong connection with Puthenkulangara Amma, I remembered from my childhood people saying that if you did *kuthiyottam* you'll get whatever you wanted. At the beginning of 1998 I promised to offer *kuthiyottam* and in that same year my son was born. Two years later I also had a daughter. ... It was a miracle, now I help other women. I give them medical advice—the right time in the month and so on—but also teach them to have a positive attitude, because mental strain plays a big role in these problems. I went to the Swami Vivekananda Mission and learned meditation and visualisation, and now I teach it to other women.

Laxmiamma's attitude was echoed in the words of other Nayar sponsors—like Laxmiamma, migrants to India's major urban centres—who

explained *kuthiyottam* to us in terms of '*shakti* worship', 'rising of *kundalini shakti*', 'transformation of self through sacrifice' and 'enhancement of mind-power'. These notions, which stress religiosity as an individual inner experience, were significantly absent in conversations with either local traditionalists or Gulf migrant newcomers, but had currency amongst some of the most innovative and controversial new *kuthiyottam* troupes.

VII
The performers: Creativity and innovation

The troupes of semi-professional *kuthiyottam* performers are necessarily drawn into these debates on 'tradition' versus 'innovation'. After all, their presence and expertise is essential to undertake the sacrifice: not only do they sing and teach the two boys their dance steps, but they also provide the sponsors for the boys themselves, give advice on how to proceed each night, make all the necessary ritual preparations, make or rent decorations for the house and temporary shrine, and hire all the other performing groups which are taken in procession to the temple. A good troupe will attract large crowds during the preparatory nights, enhancing the sponsor's chances of being judged as 'successful' and pleasing the goddess. The more than twenty troupes working around the temple are extremely powerful and central agents, upon whom sponsors must rely. The question of whether one is sponsoring a 'new' or 'traditional' form of *kuthiyottam* relates to a large extent to what the performers do or do not do: the role of a sponsor is eventually limited to trying to hire, in an extremely competitive market in which famous troupes are booked years ahead, a performing troupe with a style in accordance to his—traditionalist or innovative—tastes.

The performing troupes, usually around fifteen to twenty-five people (up to ten singers and the remainder dancers), are highly tuned to issues of sponsor taste. To some extent troupes offer a sponsor what they judge him to want. 'We go to the house and get a sense of the atmosphere there,' said members of one of the most successful troupes. 'During the preparation nights we also adjust our performance to the mood of the audience: no *kuthiyottam* is ever the same!' The troupes' main aim is to offer a performance which will please the public as well as the goddess, gaining in the wake of their success a reputation and hence more bookings for future *kuthiyottams*. And it is in this effort to build fame and reputation that even troupes considered by sponsors to be 'traditional' admit that every year they are bringing in a number of subtle changes, slowly shifting

tastes and ritual forms. For example, the dressing and decorating of the two sacrificial boys as kings, regarded by many sponsors as 'traditional', was in fact introduced some thirty years ago by the brother of one famous troupe leader, himself a *kuthiyottam* performer but also involved in theatre. It occurred to him, his brother related, that the boys could be put into costume and make-up like the mythological kings of popular stage plays; it is now inconceivable that anyone would not so transform the boys' appearance for the final, dramatic day. The same *asan* told us that

> there are no consistent customs; we used to have only one lamp in the temporary shrine for the goddess, then we used three and now there are nine. Now the custom is to use metal items for *puja*: sometime in the future there will probably be plastic items.

Another remembered the days before the *chural muri*—the thread used for side-piercing—was a gold or silver wire: 'We actually used to make it; it was bamboo cane made sharp and polished; used to really hurt.' Even the basic formation of two boys is not stable: we have seen lavish *kuthiyottams* with four and even six boys, while performers remembered single boys being used. Older performers remember that when they were young—around fifty years ago—the singing and dancing lasted only for a couple of hours each night at the most and only one story was sung. Moreover, *kuthiyottam* then was a private family affair; no unrelated spectators were invited and only family members and performers received food.

But the most important changes are brought to the core of the performance: the songs and dances. As you will remember, at the centre of *kuthiyottam* stand four dance steps which, accompanied by four songs with different rhythms but similar in style (called *thaanavatam*), are taught to the two boys. The four songs make up a complete story and each one has a different rhythm and associated steps: the first song is long and slow, the last one short and fast. For all troupes, the main story is about the goddess fighting and slaying the demon Darikan. Besides the main ones, a number of other stories are sung, where praises to the goddess are replaced by stories from Hindu epics. But one full story cannot be concluded within four songs, so to each story—which remains fixed within any particular troupe from year to year and may be similar among other troupes—is added an extra, 'free', song—*kummi*. Apart from the initial and final half-hour when the boys are instructed in their dance to the accompaniment of the basic four-song cycle, *kummi* songs

take up the bulk of each night's performance. These added songs, written anew every year, differ slightly from the main songs—tending towards faster rhythms, being more melodic and open to influence from popular music. Similarly, the dance steps which accompany *kummi* songs are more harmonious and inventive, drawing from other popular dances and art forms. A number of performers argued that *kummi* is a rather recent innovation, perhaps twenty-five years old, and due to the increased popularity of *kuthiyottam*; before, only the main story was sung and was concluded in four songs.

All the members of troupes we talked to told us that it is through *kummi* songs and dance that performers express their musical and performative skills. Shah is a new singer and troupe leader who has recently moved into the area from the city. He is a Sai Baba devotee, in this rural area a sign itself of 'foreign or city returned' status, who holds regular house *bhajans*; he and his brother work as actors and singers in live theatre and Malayalam television. Shah, who has made several audio recordings of his songs and who gets called for public performances around a wide area, is violently criticised by local 'traditionalists' for the flamboyant style of his songs but much loved by many young people. He often performs five or six *kummis* after each main song, arguing that the latter 'are too slow and boring; people come to *kuthiyottam* only to hear *kummi*.' One of Shah's famous songs, which divides public opinion, is the 'prawn and green mango song', in which a busy housewife is able to go and see *kuthiyottam* because Devi comes to help her get the dinner cooked on time. Housewives and curry-making alike are considered by traditionalists unsuitable topics for devotional songs, being insufficiently lofty and not drawn from puranic stories. Troupes like Shah's are accused by 'traditionalists' of being 'too melodic and singing as if they were doing pop-songs'; their dance steps have also been accused of becoming 'too effeminate, like *thiruvadira* [dance performed by Nayar women at Onam, Kerala's new year festival]'.

The majority of lead singers in each troupe, as well as some of the dancers, are involved at various levels in performance arts throughout the year, commonly in theatre companies or as playback singers for film songs (cf. Caldwell 1999: 45–51). Some are even performers in Malayalam TV soaps. The most successful troupes make professional recordings of their *kummi* songs. Tapes are then sold throughout the year and played at temple festivals across a wide area. Several troupes have performed on television and had their songs broadcast on the radio (see Tarabout 1997: 141ff. on the 'folklorisation' of non-Brahminical temple

performing arts). We should not, however, assume that a shift in form—from 'unregistered performance' to recorded and duplicated commodity, similar to the shift sometimes posited from oral to literate culture—necessarily entails either an ossification of form or an end to the proliferation of versions. Rather, we find a dialectic or negotiation in which audience taste—perhaps already formed and influenced through listening to pre-recorded tapes—and performer aesthetic—ever eager to display virtuosity and artistry—combine to produce ever new and variant forms (cf. Qureshi 1995).[11]

For these semi-professional troupes *kuthiyottam* is mainly a vehicle for artistic expression which allows them to perform in front of keen audiences—of people and of deities. Concerned on the one hand with their own popularity but on the other refusing to be tied to stultifying styles and forms, they carefully use the *kummi* songs and steps to shift public tastes; *kummi* rhythms and themes are thus slowly percolating into the four main songs/steps. As one dancer told us 'sometimes one of us will find a new step and we'll try it out with the group and if they all like it and the *asan* agrees that it's good, we'll then incorporate it.' Several *asans* gave us copies of the lyrics of songs which they themselves had composed. Low caste, new-moneyed Gulf migrants and metropolitan-returned migrants play an important role in this process of change: their lack of commitment to 'tradition' makes them more sympathetic to innovative styles and practices. Singers like Shah, whose artistic boldness attracts hostility and violent opposition from traditional quarters, can thrive by appealing to the tastes of these newcomers, cornering for themselves in the process an extremely lucrative niche of the ritual market while furthering their success as performers.

VIII
Conclusions

The changes we have described are not at all remarkable: *kuthiyottam* is part of a number of rituals which are performed outside or in front of temples and elsewhere by non-Brahmin ritual specialists and thus less

[11] As Babb argues, 'Standardisation is a central issue in the study of the impact of modern media on religious culture ... some media, such as film and television, do have a strong propensity in this direction ... however, other media—good examples are chromolithography and audio cassettes—seem to be able to register the variety of South Asian tradition even as they also project more unifying religious visions' (Babb 1995: 5).

subject to the constraints of scriptural Hinduism and Brahminical orthodoxy (see, e.g., Caldwell 1999; Frasca 1990; Fuller 1992; Hiltebeitel 1991). While mainstream temple rituals might appear to be more fixed and slower to change, popular Hinduism and ritual practices, in Kerala as elsewhere in India, are more explicitly in a state of flux, open to contestations, redefinitions and innovations: old rituals might be dropped or modified while new ones might be introduced from neighbouring areas. New items are brought into programmes; new styles are adopted.

But these changes are not steady and linear: radical and innovative changes tend to take place in the midst of wider social changes, brought about by agents who are themselves struggling with upheaval. In the case of *kuthiyottam* we can connect its inception and subsequent shifts in its expression with various social shifts from the late 19th century onwards: a modernising economy and infrastructure, intensifying and facilitating links between places and people; the partial collapse of old landed elites and their reactionary defence of diminishing power bases; struggles for the abolition of untouchability and low-caste efforts to claim equality and dignity; post-independence demands for skilled literate workers in wider India; and most recently—and importantly—Gulf migration, economic liberalisation and the consequent rise of a new-moneyed middle class. Ritual supplies the ever-shifting ground for contestations of control, tournaments of worth and assertions of status, while confronting and attempting to domesticate these social changes (De Neve 2000; Dirks 1991; Peabody 1997).

While migration-generated wealth has led to an ever increasing commoditisation of ritual practices allowing for new performers and sponsors to take part in *kuthiyottam*, this in turn has heightened anxieties about the authenticity of ritual performances, leading to widespread preoccupations and (politically charged) debates about what is 'traditional' and what is not. Orthodox Nayars, RSS supporters and amateur pamphlet producers who attempt to standardise and record (in print and audio media) authorised or correct versions of 'tradition' are engaged in activities just as modern as the endeavour of those parvenus or modernist dissenters who openly opt for innovation and change.[12] The recent origins of the temple and of *kuthiyottam* are both remembered and widely acknowledged to be rooted in the bringing in and copying of attractive items seen elsewhere by migrant workers, even as the local elite makes

[12] We note, of course, that appeals to both 'tradition' and 'modernity' as opposed categories are a modern phenomenon.

futile attempts to fix and eternalise a static local history. The post-1972 ritual expansion via opening up to new performers and sponsors and the reinvigorated arguments about what makes for 'success' have once again sharpened debates between those who would lay claim to the guardianship of unchanging tradition and those trying to enter the arena. The former are constantly shifting ground as they try to hold back a tide of social change and widening participation; the latter, in their openness to experimentation, are heir to the tradition which we see unfolded most clearly in the memories and stories of performers—a tradition of borrowing and innovation in the interests of enlarging the spectacle and offering pleasure to a hard-to-placate goddess, imperatives which set their own fast-paced escalation of demands for something new and attractive. As one performer eventually remarked in response to our persistent questioning about form,

> It's not copying Bhadrakali dancing on the demon's body ... it's not like Siva's *thandava* dance ... listen, maybe we can't say any more than that the whole thing is just there to please Devi; yes, you can say like that.

The commodity logic of Kerala's culture of migration is in harmony then with this ritual's demands for novelty, spectacle and no sparing of expense. *Kuthiyottam* becomes a perfect vehicle for the identity-crafting project of return migrants, eager to objectify and project to the community a transformed status. Migrants are split in the styles of pursuing self-transformation. Lower caste new-moneyed Gulf migrants, whose families have often moved from hut-dwelling labourers to villa-dwelling wealth in twenty years, favour externalising aesthetics of objectification: gold jewellery, flashing lights, a large procession. Higher-caste migrants returning from professional or service jobs in urban India, where they have imbibed such influences as Sai Baba devotionalism, favour internalising aesthetics of self, taking on modern bourgeois orientations towards a focus on the person's internal condition (devotion, sincerity). Both sets of migrants agree, with performers and in opposition to traditionalisers, that the goddess' pleasure is not an unchanging 'tradition'.

While migrants in neo-liberal optimism have been fondly imagined as being, inevitably, innovators who bring the fruits of 'progress' home while shaking a stick at dusty traditions, a suitable corrective to this picture has been presented recently by those who stress the return migrant's rush towards orthodoxy and standardised reformed practice (e.g., Gardner 1995: 239ff; Lefebvre 1999). In *kuthiyottam* we apparently see

just such a phenomenon: new low-caste money tries to buy into old high-caste traditions. Yet closer attention to ethnography warns us not to become set yet again in our ideas about what types of shifts in consciousness or orientations towards practice might necessarily be entailed in the experiences of dislocation and exposure to the new which are putatively involved in migration. Migrants are not always hell-bent on a rush to buy into orthodoxy, but can also act as veritable innovators, introducing new aesthetic forms and a novel sense of religiosity; they may innovate unwittingly, through lack of expertise and knowledge and a subsequent reliance on ritual specialists; or may be buying into an 'orthodoxy'/orthopraxy which itself is a recent—modern—fabrication; migrants' innovations may even be part of older practices which stress fluidity and eclecticism. Our understandings of the relationships between migration, modernity and practice therefore need to be nuanced via local ethnography, where, for example, the experience of Muslim migrants discovering a wider world of Islam (Gulf or global, and decidedly modern; see Gardner 1993 and Simpson in this volume), which potentially liberates them from localised hierarchies of lineage and land, may be a very different case from that of Hindu migrants returning to and trying to find a better place within just such localised formations.

REFERENCES

APTER, A. 1993. Atinga revisited: Yoruba witchcraft and cocoa economy, 1950–1951. *In* J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, eds., *Modernity and its malcontents: Ritual and power in postcolonial Africa*, pp. 111–28. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

BABB, L. 1995. Introduction. *In* L. Babb and S. Wadley, eds., *Media and the transformation of religion in South Asia*, pp. 1–20. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

CALDWELL, S. 1999. *Oh terrifying mother: Sexuality, violence and worship of the goddess Kali*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

CARRIER, J. and J. HEYMAN. 1997. Consumption and political economy. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3, 2: 355–72.

CHAUDHURI, K.N. 1990. *Asia before Europe: Economy and civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CHIRIYANKANDATH, J. 1998. Bounded nationalism: Kerala and the social and regional limits of Hindutva. *In* T.B. Hansen and C. Jaffrelot, eds., *The BJP and the compulsions of politics in India*, pp 202–27. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

COLLOREDO-MANSFELD, R. 1999. *The native leisure class: Consumption and cultural creativity in the Andes*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

COMAROFF, J. and J. COMAROFF. 1993. Introduction. *In* J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, eds., *Modernity and its malcontents: Ritual and power in postcolonial Africa*, pp. viii–xxxvii. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

De Neve, G. 2000. Patronage and 'community'. The role of a Tamil 'village' festival in the integration of a town. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, 3: 501–19.

Dirks, N. 1991. Ritual and resistance: Subversion as a social fact. *In* D. Haynes and G. Prakash, eds., *Contesting power: Resistance and everyday social relations in South Asia*, pp. 213–38. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Dumont, L. 1986. *A south Indian subcaste: Social organization and religion of the Pramalai Kallar*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Frasca, R. 1990. *The theater of the Mahabharata: Terukkuttu performances in south India*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Fuller, C.J. 1992. *The camphor flame*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gardner, K. 1993. Mullahs, migrants and miracles. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 27, 2: 213–35.

———. 1995. *Global migrants, local lives: Travel and transformation in rural Bangladesh*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Gell, A. 1988. Anthropology, material culture and consumption. *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 19: 43–48.

Gmelch, G. 1980. Return migration. *Annual review of anthropology* 9: 135–59.

Gulati, L. 1983. Male migration to Middle East and the impact on the family. *Economic and political weekly* 18, 52 & 53. 2217–26.

Harilal, K.N. and K.J. Joseph. 2000. *Stagnation and revival of Kerala economy*. IDS Working Paper 305.

Hiltebeitel, A. 1991. *The cult of Draupadi*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Joseph, K.V. 1988. *Migration and economic development in Kerala*. Delhi: Mittal Publications.

Kurien, P.A. 1994. Non-economic bases of economic behaviour: The consumption, investment and exchange patterns of three emigrant communities in Kerala, India. *Development and change* 25: 757–83.

Lefebvre, A. 1999. *Kinship, honour and money in rural Pakistan: Subsistence economy and the effect of international migration*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.

Lewandowski, S. 1980. *Migration and ethnicity in urban India*. Delhi: Manohar.

Mateer, S. 1991a [1870]. *Land of charity: A descriptive account of Travancore and its people*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services.

———. 1991b [1883]. *Native life in Travancore*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services.

Mathew, E.T. and P.R.G. Nair. 1978. Socio-economic characteristics of emigrants and emigrants' households: A case study of two villages in Kerala. *Economic and political weekly* 13, 28: 1141–53.

Miller, D. 1995. Consumption as the vanguard of history. *In* D. Miller, ed., *Acknowledging consumption*, pp. 1–57. London: Routledge.

Miller, R.E. 1992 [1976]. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A study in Islamic trends*. Madras: Orient Longman.

Mills, M.B. 1999. *Thai women in the global labour force: Consuming desires, contested selves*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Nair, P.R.G. 1989. Incidence, impact and implications of migration to the Middle East from Kerala (India). *In* R. Amjad, ed , *To the Gulf and back*, pp. 343–64. New Delhi: International Labour Organisation.

———. 1994. Migration of Keralites to the Arab world. *In* B.A Prakash, ed., *Kerala's economy: Performance, problems, prospects*, pp. 95–114 New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Nambiar, A.C.K. 1997. Labour migration to the Middle East: A socio-economic perspective. *Indian journal of regional science* 29, 1: 55–68.

Oberai, A.S., Pradhan H. Prasad and M G. Sardana. 1989. *Determinants and consequences of internal migration in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Obeyesekere, G. 1984 [1981]. *Medusa's hair: An essay on personal symbolism and religious experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1990. *The work of culture: Symbolic transformation in psychoanalysis and anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Oddie, G.A. 1995. *Popular religion, elites and reforms: Hook-swinging and its prohibition in colonial India, 1800–1894*. Delhi: Manohar.

Osella, F. 1993. Caste, class, power and social mobility in Kerala, India. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Osella, F. and C. Osella. 1996 Articulation of physical and social bodies in Kerala. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 30, 1: 37–68.

———. 1999. From transience to immanence: Consumption, life-cycle and social mobility in Kerala, south India. *Modern Asian studies* 33, 4: 989–1020.

———. 2000a. *Social mobility in Kerala: Modernity and identity in conflict*. London: Pluto.

———. 2000b. Migration, money and masculinity in Kerala. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, 1: 117–33.

Padel, F. 1995. *The sacrifice of human being· British rule and the Konds of Orissa*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Panikkar, K.N. 1989. *Against lord and state· Religion and peasant uprisings in Malabar, 1836–1921*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Peabody, N. 1997. Inchoate in Kota? Contesting authority through a north Indian pageant-play. *American ethnologist* 24, 3: 559–84.

Prakash, B.A. 1978. Impact of foreign remittances· A case study of Chavakkad village in Kerala. *Economic and political weekly* 13, 27: 1107–11.

———. 2000. Exodus of Gulf emigrants: Return emigrants of Varkala town in Kerala. *Economic and political weekly* 35, 51: 4534–40.

Qureshi, R.B. 1995. Recorded sound and religious music: The case of *Qawwālī*. *In* L. Babb and S. Wadley, eds., *Media and the transformation of religion in South Asia*, pp. 139–66. Philadelpia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Radhakrishnan, P. 1989. *Peasant struggles, land reforms and social change: Malabar 1836–1982*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Reiniche, M. 1979. *Les dieux et les hommes: Etude des cultes d'un village du Tirunelveli, Inde du Sud*. Paris: Mouton

Russell, S.S. 1992. Migrant remittances and development. *International migration* 30, 3 & 4: 267–87.

Tarabout, G. 1986. *Sacrifier et donner à voir en pays Malabar: Les fêtes de temple au Kèrala (Inde du Sud): Étude anthropologique* Paris: Publication de l'EFEO.

———. 1997. L'évolution des cultes dans les temples hindous. L'example du Kérala (Inde du Sud). *In* C. Clémentin-Ojha, ed., *Renouveaux religieux en Asie*, pp. 127–54. Paris: Publication de l'EFEO.

Thurston, E. 1989 [1906]. *Ethnographic notes in southern India*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services.

Zachariah, K.C. 1968. *Migrants in Greater Bombay*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

ZACHARIAH, K.C., E.T. MATHEW and S. IRUDAYA RAJAN. 1999. *Impact of migration on Kerala's economy and society* CDS working paper 297.

———. 2000 *Socio-economic and demographic consequences of migration in Kerala.* CDS working paper 303.

The Indian Economic and Social History Review

A Quarterly Journal from SAGE India

Managing editors: Sunil Kumar, University of Delhi
Sanjay Subrahmanyam, University of Oxford

For nearly four decades, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* has been a meeting ground for scholars whose concerns span diverse cultural and political themes with a bearing on social and economic history. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* is the foremost journal devoted to the study of the social and economic history of India, and South Asia more generally. The journal publishes articles with a wider coverage, referring to other Asian countries but of interest to those working on Indian history. Articles cover India's South Asian neighbours so as to provide a comparative perspective. Issues are periodically organised around a specific theme as a special number. The journal's principal features are research articles, substantial review articles and bibliographic surveys, which also cover material available in Indian languages, as a special feature.

Recent special issues:
38:1 (2001): Exploring Intellectual Cultures in Pre-colonial and Colonial India
39:2&3 (2002): Land, Politics and Trade in South Asia, 18th–20th Centuries: Essays in Memory of Dharma Kumar

Frequency
Quarterly (March, June, September, December)

For subscription information contact the office near you:
Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, B-42 Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi 110 017, India or email at journalsubs@indiasage.com.

Sage Publications Ltd, 6 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PU, UK or email at subscription@sagepub.co.uk.

Sage Publications Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320, USA or email at order@sagepub.com.

SAGE Publications
New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

Veiled constructions: Conflict, migration and modernity in eastern Sri Lanka

C.Y. Thangarajah

This article analyses transformations of rural gender relations and local patterns of religious consumption amongst female Muslim migrants from eastern Sri Lanka to the Middle East. Migration has led to reconfigurations of everyday practices within a unified and unifying pan-Islamic code of conduct. It is evident, however, that women are successfully negotiating and recasting their roles by utilising those very same religious discourses and practices which attempt to regulate them. Migrant women in Sri Lanka use imported consumer goods and 'Arabi' practices as a means of empowering themselves. In this context, Islamic religious practices play an empowering and progressive role in migrant women's lives.

This article is about the transformations taking place in rural gender relations and local patterns of religious consumption. The context is the migration of women from eastern Sri Lanka to the Middle East, where they are employed as housemaids. The analysis is situated within the complexities of global flows of goods, ideas and people, and shows the impossibility of predicting social change, as well as the ambiguities involved in transnational reformist Islam. It also attempts to unravel some of the complexities of patriarchy within Islamic societies. Conventional analysis suggests that patriarchy and Islamisation exert pressure on women by restricting them to particular styles of dress and housing. My fieldwork indicates that women are using Islamic styles to renegotiate and expand rights and opportunities. By selling their labour in the Middle East, they use their experiences of working in Muslim households in the Gulf, and their adoption of Islamic dress, as means of establishing moral, religious and material superiority over others in their villages. I suggest

C.Y. Thangarajah is a member of the Department of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Culture, Eastern University, Chenkalady, Sri Lanka.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

that these women are transforming themselves and wider society by restructuring existing social categories and cultural symbols.

But these processes are not linear. For instance, migration is conventionally presented as a harbinger of modernity. In this case the mobilisation of resources, increases in the productivity of labour, and the proliferation of urban forms of life which migration involves appear not to have encouraged secularisation, which modernity is supposed to usher in. In that sense, migration is complex and multi-faceted, transforming institutions and identities (Bernal 1994: 39). But in analyses that privilege the constant, the structural and the timeless, or emphasise the abstract rather than the concrete, such everyday and often contradictory processes in the village are frequently denied. This article argues that one must move away from unilinear, universalised, male dominated perspectives to investigate the process of mediation and engagement within the new globalised labour relations in which identities are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated (Feldman 2001; Gardner 1995; Hale 1994; Moghadam 1993; Ong 1987). It traces such processes by giving primacy to women's everyday practices, showing how they negotiate the emerging trends within modernist orthodox Islam to reconfigure an Islamic identity, interpreted through their personal experience.

The wider context of these changes is the following: global processes, particularly migration, have incorporated local South Asian communities into a wider Islamic world and have helped to reconfigure everyday religious practices within a unified pan-Islamic code of conduct. These processes are intensified by the religious schools and movements sponsored and supported by wealthy Islamic nations such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Libya. This is evident in eastern Sri Lanka where local orthodox Islamic groups that derive their inspiration from the Islamic nations have influenced members of the rising middle class. They have benefited from the open economy policy of the Sri Lankan government and have gained white-collar jobs, thanks to their new-found bargaining position vis-à-vis the national government and the expansion of opportunities available through state patronage.

This new complexity of relations within the global cultural economy is seen by some as overlapping, 'disjunctive', and defying the usual 'centre-periphery models' (Appadurai 1997: 32). Appadurai argues that these relations go beyond the usual dichotomies of push-pull factors (migration), or of consumers and producers. He uses the term ethnoscape to capture the disjuncture while emphasising 'fluidity' and the 'cultural flow' (ibid.). Thus construed, these movements and relations are 'not

objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision. Rather, they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors' (ibid.). Here again Appadurai privileges specific context over the universal.

Even though national borders have become less meaningful, as Appadurai points out, in another sense new orientations develop. In this reoriented perspective, Islamisation is seen in relation to the Middle East, an area that is perceived as the 'centre' of the Islamic world. This of course neglects the fact that there are more Muslims or practitioners of Islam outside the Middle East in countries such as Indonesia, India and Malaysia. Furthermore, the so-called core of the Islamic world has a substantial number of non-Muslims including Jews, Christians of various denominations, Bahais and Yezidis (Khalidi 1998: 75). Such misperceptions are common for regions such as the Middle East (Said 1978) and India (Cohn 1996), and have been systematised and legitimised as forms of knowledge in area studies programmes, from the 1950s to 1980s, particularly in the US (Khalidi 1998: 79). A key aspect of this 'orientalism' is, of course, the representation of women in Islamic societies. Here, analysis has tended to assume a totalising and universalist practice and fails to pay attention to the particular circumstances in which traditions and customs are constructed, reconstructed, interpreted and deployed. Such an approach views patriarchy 'as made up of male domination and privilege, the absence of individual agency, ... as a totalizing project' (Feldman 2001: 1100).

Rather than being timeless and rigid, however, there is evidence across the Muslim world of how women change their lives by successfully negotiating and recasting their roles using those very elements that attempt to regulate and control them. As pointed out by Moghadam, it is important not to conflate Islam with patriarchy (Moghadam 1993). Rather, Islam and patriarchy must be understood in specific contexts and in 'social-structural and developmental terms' (ibid.: 109). People in specific contexts negotiate and reorder the social structure in a variety of ways. In Bangladesh, for example, migration has altered power and status relations within migrant villages, transforming economic and social processes, and Gardner documents how to have access to the metropolis is to have access to wealth and power (Gardner 1995: 272). Similarly, by acquiring wealth and symbolic capital in the 'core' areas of Islam, women from 'marginal' areas are able to gain power and wealth.

In analysing such issues, we also need to carefully distinguish which women we are discussing, for cultural representation is clearly linked to class structure. Meriwether and Tucker, for example, point out instances

where upper class Muslim women are visible in the public arena (Meriwether and Tucker 1999: 16). Upper-class women in Egypt take part in religious discussions and general discourse on the Koran (Hegland 1999: 191). In societies such as Egypt, there are women who were never restricted by the veil or confined to the home, who had and have access to the public sphere, and who operate relatively freely. Yet at the same time the popular image of 'women' in such societies is rather different from dominant models. Along similar lines, women from the margins of the Islamic world may establish links with what are seen as centres of Islamic culture and religion, and through their representations of that life can acquire a new authority. It is this phenomenon which my article seeks to examine.

Sri Lankan women who go to the Middle East as housemaids enlist material goods and 'Arab' practices as a means of empowering themselves. In Sri Lankan Muslim society, these 'Arab' practices are associated with greater sophistication, mobility and social respect. The Islamic orthodoxy experienced by housemaids in the Middle East is mediated by the material wealth and economic success which they also find there. This in turn alters their self-perception as Muslims and on their return they construct a new Islamic identity. Their role is recast, not simply in terms of a moral superiority acquired through altered religious practices, but as women who have acquired a new level of sophistication by their knowledge of a high-tech way of life. In this sense, religion for these women plays an empowering and liberating role. Even though they ultimately return to a life of domesticity and mothering within the village, they have a new authority gained from managing and running a Middle Eastern household.

I
The role of the housemaids in the economy

As has frequently been remarked, the global capitalist economy implies a global labour market. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, this involves a reorientation of labour away from agriculture to industrial and other activities both at home and abroad. Yet while the demand for migrant labour increases the labourers' economic returns, globalisation keeps migrants on the political and social margins in the host countries so that they can be easily expelled once they are no longer required (Parrenas 2001: 1134). Employers of migrants such as housemaids rely on harsh and discriminatory immigration regimes, lack of labour protection, and wages set by the ostensibly free market to maximise their returns. Many

housemaids assume the role of surrogate mothers and caretakers within Arab homes, providing the women of their host Arab families with the opportunity to go out to work and creating a stable domestic environment for their host families. Yet this is at the cost of leaving their own children and other dependents—in return for meagre economic returns.

There is no denying the importance of their labour in Sri Lanka. To a cash strapped economy such as that of Sri Lanka, remittances from the Middle East constitute over 60 per cent of the total foreign exchange inflow. Between 1991 and 1999 remittances from the Middle East recorded an almost fivefold increase from Rs 9,515 million to Rs 45,766 million. A substantial segment of these are remittances from housemaids. According to statistics from the Sri Lanka Foreign Exchange Bureau (SLFEB), 15,809 people left for the Middle East in 1986. By 1999 this figure had increased to 179,114. In 1986, 67 per cent of migrants were male and 33 per cent female. By 1990 this proportion had reversed with men forming only 36 per cent of all migrants, and the male/female ratio has remained constant ever since.[1] Since 1991 housemaids have constituted between 75 per cent and 80 per cent of all female migrants, the number of housemaids peaking at over 113,000 in 1995 but still totalling nearly 88,000 in 1999. Each year there are new entrants into this labour market for, while some women return again and again, others stay in Sri Lanka and are replaced by new migrants.

Thus for Sri Lanka as a whole, the employment of women as housemaids in the Middle East is a major source of foreign exchange. The Eastern Province is one of the major beneficiaries of such flows and many villages in this area are dependent on remittances from women working in the Middle East. One such village is Ullur.

II
The village of Ullur

Ullur[2] is situated in the Batticaloa district of eastern Sri Lanka. It has a population of 30,477 consisting of 7,236 families.[3] The people of Ullur

[1] The importance of female remittances is never publicly acknowledged. This is of course nothing new, and neither is the fact that women have always made a large contribution to the domestic economy. Indeed, in Sri Lanka, the lower one goes in the social hierarchy, the more women contribute in terms of their labour.

[2] This is a pseudonym.

[3] The Muslims of the East in general have a historical perception of being either the descendants of traders from Afghanistan and Arabia, or indigenous, Tamil-speaking *Mukkuva* clans (Hussain 1998)

today consider themselves to be almost exclusively Muslim. The village of Ullur claims at least 500 years of recorded history.[4] Some villagers claim to be descended from Indian immigrants, while others claim the superior status of Arab descent. Like other Muslims in Sri Lanka, Ullur Muslims speak Tamil.

Muslims of the East Coast live in endogamous segments, the unit of endogamy being the local village. McGilvray (1997) has documented the strong influence of matrilineal clans called *kudi* to the south of Batticaloa. Today the influence of such formally organised matrilineal clans is waning in those areas, and is almost non-existent in the north of Batticaloa. The increasing influence of globalised and universal Islamic values has made such practices un-Islamic in local perceptions. Now, people tend to dismiss any reference to them as an expression of *antha kaalam*, 'those days', and today class is much more important. Matriliny, however, is still prevalent in marriage and property transfer, and residential patterns are still matrilocal. Women tend to marry matrilateral cross-cousins and after marriage husbands go to live with the bride in her natal home. Within a year or two at the most, the new conjugal couple will move into another house built commonly within the same compound or a new house built in the neighbourhood. At marriage, the bride receives a dowry in accordance with the wealth of her family.

McGilvray has argued that the Muslims of Sri Lanka are historically and culturally closely linked to the Mappilla Muslims of Kerala and the Marakkayars of southern Tamil Nadu (McGilvray 1998). Yet, while south Indian Muslims have been relatively secure in terms of their ethnic identity as Tamils or Malayalis, the situation is rather different for Muslims in Sri Lanka. Under British colonial rule, Muslims were identified as, and saw themselves as, 'Moors', ethnically distinct from Tamils although sharing a common language. After independence, the rise of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism marginalised both Tamils and Muslim 'Moors', accusing both groups of unfairly gaining ground during the colonial period at the expense of the Sinhala-Buddhist majority. At the same time, Muslims began to establish community mosques and attempt to construct a more explicitly Islamic identity.

The rise of conflict between the Sinhala-dominated state and groups of Tamil militants from the early 1980s onwards had a devastating effect on the inhabitants of Ullur. Previously, most inhabitants of Ullur were

[4] There is a multitude of written 'History of Muslims' from the East Coast. See Hussain 1998: 2–6 for details.

dependent on paddy cultivation either directly as labourers or owners, or indirectly as traders in paddy or in agricultural inputs; others depended on government employment or petty trade. The poor were also heavily involved in lagoon fishing and collecting forest products, and also benefited from a 'social security' system which allowed them access to the leftovers after harvest. As a result of the conflict, access to paddy land was heavily restricted or even denied, travel for trade or to gain access to forest resources almost impossible, and traditional forms of support for the poor and the destitute ruptured. Furthermore, Muslims in Ullur were increasingly caught between the Tamil militants on the one hand, and the forces of the Sinhala-dominated state on the other.

In such a situation, the people of Ullur had to look for other means of survival, the only alternative being meagre social security handouts from the government. One strategy was to seek other employment opportunities outside the district, but much more important was international migration, especially migration to the Middle East. In 1997 over 85.3 per cent of 11 households were dependent on some form of social security benefit.[5] By 2001, that figure had dropped to 77.2 per cent, thanks largely to the remittances from the Middle East. Now over 1,000 families in Ullur—more than 14 per cent of the total—have members employed in the Middle East, over 50 per cent of them being employed as housemaids.

III
Housemaids or housewives

The first Sri Lankans to migrate to the Middle East were men who worked as labourers, cleaners and other low-wage employees. They were followed by women from southern Sri Lanka seeking domestic work. These included some Muslim women from the south, but they were few in number (Brochmann 1993). In the Eastern Province, there was some resistance to women leaving their homes. Traditionally, women who left their homes to earn money were primarily from the lowest rungs of society: widows, the destitute, or elderly women who travelled around selling reed mats or cashew nuts. But in places such as Ullur, the increasing pressure of poverty after the inter-communal violence coincided with an increasing demand for Muslim housemaids to work for Muslim households in the Middle East. Where men had to raise between Rs 30,000 and Rs 50,000 to obtain an overseas job, the great demand for Muslim

[5] The following data are from the Divisional Secretary's Office, Batticaloa.

maids meant that recruitment agencies were willing to recruit Muslim women without a charge, and they could migrate within a month of making the initial contact. Thus, the potential for women to migrate began to open up.

In the case of the initial group of women who left for the Middle East, the existing ideology of matriliny and matrilocal residential patterns supported their absence in the Middle East, the absentees' domestic duties being taken over by their mothers. Most migrants were middle aged (between 35 and 40 years old), and came from poorer sections of the community. In addition, many of the women from this stratum had already left the confines of their homes and had been venturing into areas outside their villages to make a living as itinerant traders. Living on the margins of the society and seen as unrepresentative of Islamic culture, they were also less bound by cultural taboos against movement. Domesticity in their case necessarily involved venturing out of their houses for collecting firewood, harvesting reeds for mat-weaving, etc.

Apart from the less stringent social control against emigration, this mobility had also enabled a degree of economic and social independence for such women. Most household expenses were met from their earnings. They were usually members of networks of related households consisting of parents and the married children who, though they might live separately, shared a common compound with other households. Food might be prepared separately but shared between the natal family and the conjugal couple, and the cooking was often done in the home of the daughter when the father and mother or the son-in-law were away. Alternatively, the mother might do the cooking and take care of the children while the daughter was absent engaged in petty trade, collecting firewood or harvesting reeds. For this group, then, women were both housewives and income generators at the same time, so that migration to the Middle East was less of a break with customary ways of life and household organisation.

Many of the first women migrants had also had the primary responsibility of running the family, being widows, or having husbands too old to make any substantial living, or unable to find work. One woman said that she had to go to the Middle East because her husband was an invalid. Another was a widow with three small children who had lost her husband in crossfire between the militants and the army, whilst a third woman was deserted by her husband and did not have any means of livelihood. In the case of Ullur, it was predominantly the widowed, deserted and destitute women who began the initial transformation. The manner in which they negotiated their move to the Middle East was also illuminating.

for they used the veil and Islam to negotiate a shift out of a life of poverty and suffering. The next section details that change.

IV
Leaving for the Middle East

As we have seen, most poor women in eastern Sri Lanka had been affected by a lack of mobility and the resultant restrictions on opportunities to earn a living. Many had already accumulated large debts and were faced with major problems in feeding their children and other dependents. Migrating to the Middle East was an opportunity to deal with these problems, but what gave them the confidence to venture out was that they were going to a Muslim country, to work within Muslim households. Thus, both Islamic orthodoxy and domesticity, generally seen as restricting for women, instead opened up a space of social mobility, financial independence and empowerment. Furthermore, anxieties about sexual insecurity did not arise with regard to this initial group of women, since they were older than subsequent migrants and more accustomed to independence.

Poor women from Ullur began to leave for countries such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi in the mid-1980s. On arrival, the Middle East was less threatening than they had feared. Instead, the *hijab* (also called *abbhai*) seemed literally to wrap them in a protective layer. The women related how, immediately on arrival, they were covered by the flowing gown and veil:

> As soon as we arrive in the airport we are met by the Arab boss. With the family, they take us to the *Souke* and buy us *abbhai* and long dresses like *maxi*. We wear the *maxi* when inside the house. Both *abbhai* and *maxi* are long flowing gowns which cover from the neck to toe: they cover all the body. There is a scarf which covers the entire head except the face. They also buy us gloves that cover our hands. When we go out, we cover the faces with a cloth. It is a piece of small scarf with a piece of elastic so that you can put it just above the nose; only the eyes are left open. They do not like the *saree* because it may expose sections of body, such as parts of the waist. When they see us arriving wrapped in a *saree*, they say '*Harram ... harram ...*'.

' There has been an extensive body of literature on the role and function of Islamic dress for women, seen as restricting women to the procreative

role, or even protecting men from the dangers of their sexuality. But the veil also creates a space for the Islamic woman to move out of the domestic arena: 'veiling and sex segregation ... [are] ... the means to education, work, and public activity, without jeopardizing family and community support' (Hegland 1999: 191). Protected from the gaze of men, it facilitates mobility and empowers women to capture some space within areas dominated by men (Mernissi 1975: 97). For the women from Ullur, the initial act of wearing the *hijab* or *abbhai* was a source of protection and safety from the anxieties of arriving in an alien land. During her fieldwork in a village in the western province, Gamburd notes that the Saudi agents viewed the restrictions on movement for the housemaids in the host country and the protection of the dress as 'benevolent supervision' (Gamburd 2000: 58). But what also emerges from Gamburd's work is the importance of being Muslim.

The relative advantage that women from Ullur and other Muslim villages have over women from other parts of Sri Lanka is that they are Muslim, and the demand in the Middle East is for Muslim housemaids. Not surprisingly, many non-Muslim women alter the names in their passports (Gamburd 2000: 67). In turn, employers attempt to verify whether the housemaids are indeed Muslims.

> Initially when we arrived, the *Arabi* wanted to verify whether I am really a Muslim. Since a lot of non-Muslim women arrive with their names changed as Muslims, the employers try to ascertain the truth. They ask you to recite the Koran or ask you the direction to face when praying. You are allowed to handle food and to cook only if you are a Muslim. Non-Muslims are employed to do other cleaning work in the house. They may do the preparation but cannot do the actual cooking. That is done by the *madam*. They are also not treated as well as Muslims. There is always a *idaiveli* in the relationship if you are not a Muslim housemaid. They are seen as unclean.

This ritual of authentication and the restricted access to kitchen and cooking for non-Muslim housemaids is an important component in strengthening Islamic identity. The privilege given only to Muslim women to be housemaids, and the difference in status and the access to activities such as food preparation, makes them feel privileged and strengthens their identity in comparison to non-Muslims. The taboo on preparing food is one of the strongest disadvantages for the non-Muslim housemaids, since cooking is an integral part of their identity as women at

home. The taboo makes the Muslim women feel that the non-Muslims are denied an essential part of their value as persons.

Coming from rather deprived Muslim villages, most of the women are amazed by the luxury of Gulf households, which manifest the wealth and prosperity of Islamic society; at the same time men are respectful and protective of their women. Thus, for the migrants from Ullur, both the Muslim country and the Muslim household are equated with wealth and religiosity. In turn, Islam is experienced through the prosperity, wealth, material comforts and technological advancement which they see there. Thus initiated into the Middle Eastern world and domesticity, the women begin another phase of the experience, that of household chores.

The daily routine of the housemaid consists of the entire gamut of household work from cooking and cleaning to washing clothes and taking care of children. The women begin work with the preparation of breakfast and tea at 4.00 AM and end the day at midnight with the washing up of plates and pans. Sometimes they may have a short break of about thirty to forty minutes after lunch. The average household consists of a husband, wife and three to seven children:

> The daily chores typically begin at about 4.00–4.30 AM with the washing of the cars. There are two or three cars, which have to be washed. Then the work shifts into the house with preparing morning coffee and breakfast. Afterwards the children have to be awakened and dressed if they are of school age. Later when the family leaves for work and school, back to the kitchen to prepare lunch. By mid-morning, after preparing lunch, the house has to be tidied up, dusted and vacuumed.

Though they do all this and more for a salary of $70–80 per month, the women do not see any comparative disadvantage in this rigorous regime, at least in the initial phase. The following statement was made by a 20-year-old returnee who migrated when she was 18.

> There are twelve rooms and eight bathrooms in the house. I begin with the cleaning of the bathrooms; after cleaning the bathrooms and taking away the clothes to be washed, I start with dusting the house. The *Arabi* is very strict; he will touch the walls and window sills to see whether there is any dust; windows had to be wiped and the panes gleaming; the floors had to be cleaned using the machine. It is a very

> nice machine. They have expensive carpets; if it is a tiled floor, there is a broom-like thing that you wipe the floor with; the floors have to be spotless. It is such a large house and it takes until about 1.00–1.30 PM by the time I finish that chore .... Oh ... yes, ... I forgot ... I also had to wash the clothes in the washing machine. The clothes of each person had to be washed separately; so, while cleaning the house I also operate the washing machine. While doing all this, I had to take care of the baby, feed her, change nappies, and play with her until she goes to sleep.
>
> By 2.00 PM everyone returns from work. They change their clothes and have lunch that I had prepared. After that they sleep in the afternoon. I feed the children and wash the plates and the kitchen utensils. After tidying up the kitchen, I look after the children or play with them. *Madam* will take the baby to her room. By then, it is time to prepare the evening tea. Then, they may go out to the *souke*; sometimes, they also take me; I am allowed to do some shopping, of course using my own money; sometimes they buy me soap, toothpaste, or a small bottle of cologne if it is a special day. Sometimes they also visit friends and relatives. We may have dinner out or return home. If dinner is to be prepared, then I stay back to do the cooking. After everyone returns, they have dinner and watch TV. Then, I have my dinner and clean up the kitchen. By then, it is about 11.00 o'clock and I go to bed. Sometimes, when I have time, I write a letter to my family in Sri Lanka. Other than that, I have no time of my own. The people in Saudi are very religious. They are very particular about praying five times. In Sri Lanka, we do not break our journey while travelling to pray. But, in Saudi, they stop their cars while travelling and say their prayers. Even if it is in the middle of the desert, they touch the sand and wipe themselves in the absence of water. The women do not go to the mosque; only men do. Usually, women pray at home.

This is typical of a day's routine in the life of a large number of housemaids, as other researchers have also indicated (Brochmann 1993; Gamburd 2000). Even though the pay is meagre for the amount of work, the women do not complain. The electric cooker that is used for cooking instead of the firewood at home, the packaged food readily available from the freezer that minimises cooking, the washing machine that has replaced the backbreaking effort of washing as done at home by the river or at the communal well, the vacuum cleaner that does the sweeping

instead of the broom: these are all comparatively effort-saving. The maid's rooms also often contain a radio, TV and attached bathroom, luxuries which are unimaginable at home. Finally when they receive the salary equivalent to about Rs 7,000 at the end of the month, all their anxieties and efforts are put into perspective.

These remittances make a substantial difference at home. The money is usually sent to the maid's mother or father, since they take care of the children, and is initially utilised for settling debts. In some cases, the husband receives the money and gives whatever is necessary to the parents-in-law who take care of the children. Usually, it is because of compelling debts that women have migrated in the first place, and it is only when they have repaid these debts and carried out some repairs to the house that they decide to return. Here again, the age of the children, the assessment of their well-being during their mother's absence, the ability of her parents to take care of the children, and the possibility of better employment for the husband, are all factors that influence the woman's decision to return.

Many maids say that once the initial excitement begins to wear off, they feel the pressure of the work, even with the help of appliances such as polishers and washing machines, and the standards expected of them are very high. Yet another issue is the threat of rape by the men of the house. Though none of the informants, except one, openly admitted that they were sexually harassed or raped, it emerged in subsequent interviews that the threat of rape is very real. It is an occupational hazard that the women felt they had to face. One woman said that if the men at home are so concerned that women should remain 'pure', then they should not insist on dowry, forcing young girls to migrate for employment and exposing them to such risks.

Many women said that they had to take the risk in order to provide a stable future for their children, and most women remained committed to local ideals of motherhood. Taking care of their children and the husband, along with older parents, still remains the primary focus. Nonetheless, as Gamburd argues, 'migrant mothers try both to conform to older ideals and challenge the validity of these restrictive images' (Gamburd 2000: 195). Indeed, migrant women seem to be caught between these contradictory desires, between the physical care of their family—once seen as their sacred function—and their material provision of them. In this context it is difficult to distinguish between the roles of mother, income-earner, and home-maker. Indeed, while women are blamed for abandoning their children, evidence shows that most children adjust after a short while to

their immediate carers such as grandparents or maternal aunts (Samarasinghe 1989). Women migrants are going beyond a narrow cultural definition of motherhood and employing their skills to ensure a wide range of material benefits for their dependents.

IV
The migration of younger women: Building houses and getting married

The success of the first wave of female migrants led other and younger women to consider migration. After the first generation of women migrants began to repair and improve existing houses, the possibility of using earnings to build new houses became apparent. This was related to the issue of dowry. Amongst both Hindu Tamils and Muslims in eastern Sri Lanka, a house is a major component in a bride's dowry. Given the matrilineal tendencies in this area, property—including houses—tends to devolve to girls. Uxorilocality after marriage means that young couples live either with or adjacent to the bride's parents. Whilst poor couples simply build a house for themselves, many young women demand that a house be built for them before marriage, if at all possible, to attract a rich and high status husband.

However, the local conflict and the reduced livelihood opportunities that have ensued have meant that the possibility of houses being built for a family's daughters has diminished, except insofar as migrants are concerned. Where men are working in the Middle East, they have been able to construct houses for their sisters. Even mothers who went abroad began to repair their houses, preparing them for their daughters. With increasing numbers of families attempting to build houses, the marriage market began to be linked to a brick and mortar house for dowry. This further increased the pressure on families with young girls without brothers to support them, or parents who did not want them to migrate. The option for young women was to go to the Middle East in order to earn the money for building a house themselves, for if marriage is an important component in the life-cycle of a young girl, then houses have become a prerequisite for marriage.

Once in the Middle East, most of these younger women are awestruck by the wealth they see there. They also make two particularly interesting observations. First, they say that Islam is practised within a strict and protective environment. The veil and the protection offered to women is

emphasised; they say they are offered safety, mobility, and a separate space of their own. According to one interpretation, Islamic religious orthodoxy veils the woman to control her overwhelming sexuality, but the housemaids argue that it is rather a means of protecting them from the sexual advances of men, something many of them were very afraid of before their departure. Combined with the protection and freedom they offer, long flowing dresses worn both by men and women are also seen as a symbol of wealth and modernity. Life in the Middle East is not merely Islamic, it is also a life of wealth and prosperity, and high fashion. This aspect of Islam is in contrast to life at home, where religion requires women to be confined to the home, but without the necessary facilities and comforts.

Second, younger women migrants always refer to the fact that in the Middle East the men have to give brideprice if they are to marry. This was something that they felt was particularly good about Arab customs, especially in comparison to their own experience. 'The men at home want a dowry and we have to find the money', said one particularly irritated young girl. 'They have a different Islam at home. That is not the real one,' commented another. Clearly, then, the three components of veiling, brideprice and modernity have a combined impact on the women's sense of identity.

Aside from the overall influence of religion and life-style, the women are also earning their own money. This gives them considerable power, since they are transformed from being dependents to having others dependent on them. From the senior male (the father) to the most able-bodied young men, all are dependent on the migrant. Even though their primary aim is to build a house for themselves, these women also spend some money on their younger siblings. Combined with this, the women also become experienced household managers. Particularly in host households where the wife is also employed, the maids virtually run the entire house, except in some cases where there may be an older parent who is also living with the family. In many instances, these older people get particularly attached to the maids since they give the 'care of a daughter', as one girl said. The more responsibility the housemaids have, the more they integrate into the household. Similar experiences have been encountered with women from the south of Sri Lanka as well (Gamburd 2000: 196–99). This also enables them to think of themselves as Arab women and, not surprisingly, to attempt to recreate a house at home similar to the one they lived in during their stay in the Middle East.

V
Recreating the household: The rise of Arab styles

Significant changes have taken place in the construction of houses after migration to the Middle East began in the 1980s. Almost all the families of their young girls initiate the construction of a house as soon as money begins to be remitted, apart from a small amount that is used to pay off their debts. These houses have incorporated the changing perceptions of private and public spaces that the migrants have been exposed to while employed in the Middle East.

The traditional houses of the poor, constructed of thatch, consisted of a basic room and an outer room, or two rooms with a veranda, without any specially designated space for men and women. The toilet is usually constructed away from the house, and the kitchen is also separate. The house is enclosed within a fence just about eye level, with the lower part of the fence consisting of barbed wire and the upper segment covered with thatch. In contrast, the new houses built by the Middle East returnees have clearly demarcated areas for men and women, and brick walls that are higher than usual. One young girl showed me the house that she was in the process of building, with the foundation laid for an outer hall yet to be built. This outer hall, she said, is reserved for men so that women do not have to mix with men:

> I took this idea from Saudi (Arabia). When the *arabi* family go to visit friends and relatives, the women go inside the house where they have separate spaces [*idam*]. Men do not go to where the women are. They stay in the outer hall, which is large and ornamental. Women do not come into these areas where men congregate. Unlike here [in Sri Lanka], women do not mix with men as easily. Even in the houses of relatives, unless they are brothers and sisters, they stay separately.

On the surface, this gender segregation appears to be a patriarchal restriction. Yet, as encountered by these young women, Islam is not merely religious but also economic in nature for the reason that religious transformation is also synonymous with mobility along the path to modernity. By becoming Islamic, the women also become 'modern' in terms of life-style, as well as economically independent. The women in Saudi Arabia are seen as protected and wealthy; thus migrant women use their economic power to acquire status by attempting to recreate a life-style reflecting

that of the Middle East. When the girl eventually returns, she personally supervises the construction of the house, going out dressed in the *hijab* in order to purchase various items for the house. In the past, it was men who would have done such things, but now young girls personally visit the shops to select the fixtures and building materials.

Islamic dress here is not merely religious attire, but also a status symbol. By choosing to wear the *hijab*, young women are also reliving the life of those Muslim women in the Middle East. Particularly for the women on the margins, this acquisition of wealth is complemented by the *hijab*, which in the perception of the local men is not only religious but also the highest form of modesty. Hence, even though the image of the woman in the *hijab* may be that of the modest Muslim maiden, for the woman inside the dress, it is a sign of confidence, high fashion and economic power. The mobility facilitated by the *hijab* also comes at a time when there is increasing restriction on women imposed by the more conservative section of Ullur, particularly the young students of the *madrasas*. For the affluent vehicle-owning elite these restrictions on movement are only cosmetic, but for the less wealthy the situation is rather different. Where women have to work both within and outside the home, the *hijab* comes as a welcome device, enabling more, and not less, mobility.

Combined with this, returnees possess the sophisticated knowledge needed to run a modern house, and having been halfway around the globe, they are able to handle money and banking and indeed give a new life and dignity to their households. The transformation and rise in status of returned migrants involves the commoditisation of domesticity. In many interviews parents were proud to point out the knowledge that their daughters had acquired in the Middle East. One mother proudly explained the 'knowledge of medicine' her daughter had; another stated her daughter's ability to handle household equipment; yet another showed off the interior decoration of the house, the display of imported artefacts attempting to replicate and reproduce Gulf house-styles.

Once the house is built, the equipping begins. The commodities that are brought from the Middle East supply the necessary trappings to create the atmosphere of a 'modern' and 'Islamic' household. These include small artefacts that have been discarded by the hosts, such as lampshades, ornamental mirrors, carpets, plastic flowers, etc. Wall hangings with Islamic motifs and pictures of the Karbala form an essential part of re-creating the Arab life-style. Such artefacts, which accumulate in the housemaids' rooms, are packed in large boxes and freighted back to the village.

Collecting these boxes, which arrive about a month after the return of the women, is usually a small ceremony in itself. Apart from giving rise to a small army of light trucks which are hired from the local village to transport these huge boxes, there is also lucrative employment for those who make the containers and an opportunity for the woman's family to experience one facet of the wider experience she has had. The woman, perhaps with the help of some male relatives, will leave for Colombo wearing the *hijab*. This trip is also an occasion to visit shops, go to the cinema, etc. After obtaining clearances from the shipping agency, the return journey begins. All this while, the returnee spends liberally and generally looks after her entourage, buying novel items, food or otherwise, explaining to the relatives their usage, and displaying her newly acquired knowledge and skill. On arrival at the village, the box is opened to reveal an entire range of goods and artefacts collected during her stay. They can range from perfumes to small radios or broken mirrors, to half empty cans of paint, along with discarded carpets, posters, picture frames, ornamental vase stands, ceiling fans, etc.

Once the structure of the house is complete, the family begins to look for a suitable bridegroom. There is very little inhibition amongst potential suitors in respect to women who have gone to the Middle East. One of the strongest elements offsetting any doubts about the woman is her knowledge of Islam, which the others presume to be more than theirs after her experience of living in an Islamic country, and her mode of dress further reinforces that sentiment. Hence, a woman with a house, even one only partially built, has a better chance of finding a husband. Indeed, most of the women who had returned, had married after they had built a house. This has also created an unexpected outcome. As one returnee who has a daughter now working in the Middle East commented:

> Those days, the men were content with a small hut that we built for them within the compound and gradually everyone contributed for the building of the house. Now, the demands are so high. Today, fellows who used the river-bank as the toilet demand a bathroom [*Indakki, athila ponavan ellam bathurum kekiran*].

Almost all of the bridegrooms have no permanent jobs. They are daily wage earners working in the paddy fields or rice mills, or as shop-assistants. The women are markedly different from the men. During the interviews the women happily described their experiences and showed the items they had brought, while the men merely sat looking on with

fascination. The women also often commented that they would have to go back to the Middle East in order to complete the houses they had begun to build. In most cases, the families were keen to get the girl married off as soon as the house had been built, but after marriage, it is up to the young couple to decide whether the woman should go back again. Where there were small children, the woman did not want to go until the children were grown. They said that they would prefer to take care of the children until they are at least two years old, since it would be difficult for them to work abroad looking after the children of an Arab family while their own children were languishing without them. But all the same, a woman may go abroad three or four times in the course of her life. She builds a house after the first two visits and gets married. After marriage she returns to the Middle East to complete the house or to accumulate additional capital.

VI
Conclusion: Gender and culture in Ullur

One of the startling phenomena that the opportunities in the Middle East have brought is the migration of girls as young as fifteen. With extended kin, family and neighbourhood networks, any change in the circumstances of one family immediately impacts on the other. When households of migrant women began to improve visibly, particularly with improvements to the house, even younger girls were motivated to attempt to migrate. Older sisters began to arrange placements in the Gulf for younger sisters, and neighbours recommended and encouraged agents to send out young girls. Girls as young as fifteen subjected themselves to the harsh work regime in order to break out of lives of poverty. It was not merely building a house, but the experience of working overseas that transformed them from domestic objects confined within the house to confident young women with economic power and better prospects for the future. They were also able to increase their chances of getting married, as well as assist their families to move up the social ladder.

There was yet another area of transformation. Some of the women who returned from the Middle East were also beginning consciously to adopt a more secluded form of behaviour. In many cases, they carefully balanced the public/private dichotomy. They were confidently going out to attend to various matters, but that was within the protection of the *hijab*. They were also consciously minimising their movement within

the public arena after most of their work was done, to conform to what is expected of a Muslim woman, clearly manipulating their behaviour according to the status and stages in their lives. In the initial stage, the young girls have to prove that they can handle themselves as migrants, but on their return they carefully negotiate public space in order to attend to matters such as banking, building a house, etc., protected by the *hijab*. Once that is settled, they then renegotiate their behaviour according to the social norms of seclusion in order to marry.

Viewed from this perspective, it is clear that women are able to take control over their lives, manipulating symbols and circumstances to carve out a life of stability and prosperity. Even the local orthodoxy concede that migration to the Middle East has contributed towards greater religiosity. More families send their children to school and attendance at the *madrasas* is on the increase. The orthodox Islamists see this as a definite improvement in the religiosity of the migrants and in society in general. But the women are by no means following the directions of fundamentalist Islam. While conforming to the external symbols required by the local variant of Islam, they are able to engage with yet another representation of Islam that is both orthodox and modern at the same time, and that also offers them space to expand their roles as Muslim women.

Since the early 1980s, mainly due to the influence of countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia which funded religious schools, and groups which were in the forefront of this campaign,[6] there has been a movement in Muslim villages in eastern Sri Lanka to impose an 'Islamic', that is 'Arabic', dress code. Young girls were targets of this reform, which was seen as a 'religious' requirement, and there were even attacks on those who were seen as resisting the new codes, dress and otherwise. The Muslims themselves characterised pressure from such groups as 'fundamentalist'. In this context, one of the progressive males of the village, a reputed short story writer named Haniffa, commented that one of the best things that Tamil nationalism had done to the Muslims was to restrict employment opportunities for the Muslim community, allowing Muslim women the opportunity to liberate themselves from the restrictive norms of the village. Today, according to him, women are in greater control of their lives and this was due to the opportunities in the Middle East.

[6] In the 1980s, the Iraqi government donated a housing project along with a mosque. The village is known as Saddam Hussain Village.

Bernal (1994) has argued that new restrictions placed on Sudanese women cannot be ascribed to fundamentalist Islam alone, but to wider socio-economic processes. It is within this context of 'shifting their places in the world economy' that a new understanding and interpretation is being developed of 'what it means to be Muslim'. A similar transformation can be seen to be taking place in Ullur. While women may appear to be becoming more orthodox, they are actually engaging on their own terms with aspects of what may be seen as Islamic fundamentalism, manipulating the symbols of restriction as a means of acquiring social status and religious respect.

The modern styles of dress and houses also seemingly restrict the migrant women. On their return they get married and become ideal housewives,s confined within the private spaces of the houses they themselves have built. Women go from being the economically recognised producers of capital to diminished economic roles in the unrecognised sphere of household labour. But I have suggested here that, notwithstanding these social expectations, women have their own agendas and expanded domains of control and power, reflected in their new knowledge and familiarity with the new and modern commodities of the global marketplace.

These new forms of what is perceived to be appropriate feminine behaviour express the changing roles that women have been defining for themselves within emerging perceptions of what is prestigious and fashionable (Goldberg 1991). Unlike other cases of Islamisation, the present situation is not a reaction to westernisation. It is a redefinition of identity within the 'modern', leading to redefined practices that are conservative and restrictive in character. Appadurai suggests that globalisation de-territorialises through a new imagination of social life (Appadurai 1997: 55). But in this case one can see that globalisation also leads to a reterritorialisation and re-demarcation of spaces to create new identities, redefining appropriate forms of behaviour and everyday practices in keeping with these reoriented identities. Within these redefined sites, new forms of social and cultural practice are reproduced through engaging with specific social, religious and cultural practices that are already in existence locally.

Within this context, what are perceived as 'prestigious' forms of cultural and religious expression gain primacy over others that are seen as non-modern within the reconfigured power hierarchies of the global terrain. It is my argument here that orthodox traditions are absorbed not because they are orthodox *per se*, but because they are perceived to be part of modernity.

REFERENCES

APPADURAI, A. 1997. *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

BERNAL, V. 1994. Women and the remaking of Islamic tradition. *Comparative studies in society and history* 36, 1: 36–67.

BROCHMANN, G. 1993. *Middle East avenue: Female migration from Sri Lanka to the Gulf*. Boulder: Westview.

COHN, B. 1996. *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge: The British in India*. Princeton. Princeton University Press.

FELDMAN, S. 2001 Exploring theories of patriarchy: A perspective from contemporary Bangladesh. *Signs* 26, 4: 1097–1127.

GAMBURD, M.R. 2000. *The kitchen spoon's handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's migrant housemaids*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

GARDNER, K. 1995. *Global migrants, local lives: Travel and transformation in rural Bangladesh*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

GOLDBERG, ELLIS. 1991. Smashing idols and the state: The Protestant ethic and Egyptian Sunni radicalism. *Comparative studies in society and history* 33, 1: 3–35.

HALE, S. 1994. Gender practices and Islamization in Sudan. *South Asia bulletin* 14, 2: 51–66.

HEGLAND, M.E. 1999. Gender and religion in the Middle East and South Asia. *In* M. Meriwether and J.A. Tucker, eds., *Women and gender in the modern Middle East*, pp. 177–212. London: Westview Press.

HUSSAIN, J. 1998. Eravur Muslims: A sociological research. Unpublished B.A. Dissertation, Dept. of Arabic and Islamic Civilization, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

KHALIDI, R. 1998. 'The Middle East' as a framework of analysis: Re-mapping a region in the era of globalization. *Comparative studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 18, 1: 75–81.

MCGILVRAY, D. 1997. Tamils and Muslims in the shadow of war: Schism or continuity? *South Asia* 20, Special Issue. 239–53.

———. 1998. Arabs, Moors, and Muslims: Sri Lankan Muslim ethnicity in regional perspective. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 32, 2: 433–83.

MERIWETHER, M. and J.A. TUCKER. 1999. *Women and gender in the modern Middle East*. London· Westview Press.

MERNISSI, F. 1975. *Beyond the veil: Male-female dynamics in modern Muslim society*. New York Schenkman.

MOGHADAM, V.M 1993 *Modernizing women: Gender and social change in the Middle East*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers

ONG, A 1987. *Spirits of resistance and capitalist discipline. Factory women in Malaysia*. Albany: SUNY Press.

PARRENAS, R S 2001. Transgressing the nation-state: The partial citizenship and imagined (global) community of migrant Filipina domestic workers. *Signs* 26, 4: 1129–54.

SAID, E. 1978 *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Press.

SAMARASINGHE, G. 1989 The psycho-social implications of Middle East migration on the families left behind. Colombo: Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR), mimeograph

Spirits of the womb: Migration, reproductive choice and healing in Rajasthan

Maya Unnithan-Kumar

In this article I focus on the connections between poor women's migration to a basti *in Jaipur city in north-west India and their reproductive anxieties, agency and outcomes. I suggest that, in terms of their reproductive choice and freedom, women's experience of migration is highly ambivalent. Three main consequences of women's migration account for this ambivalence: (a) a shift in gender roles, conjugal relationships and related expectations of childbearing; (b) an enhanced recourse to spiritual healers via friendship with women across castes; and (c) a greater resort to private, professional, gynaecological care, complementing the negative experiences of public health sector attitudes, provisions and programmes. While women have a greater role in reproductive decision-making as a result of a shift in gender roles and relationships, they experience greater constraints in bodily terms as reflected in the medicalisation of their bodies. Nevertheless,* basti *women are constantly negotiating better reproductive outcomes for themselves. Their resort to private health care enables them to avoid state services, allowing them direct access to health care, often without the knowledge of their husbands or relatives.*

Maya Unnithan-Kumar is Senior Lecturer, Social Anthropology, University of Sussex.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Kamlesh and her family, Mori, Vipula, Kavita, Mohan Singh, Zahida, Gerda and T.K.N Unnithan, Dr. Banerji and members of the Khejri Sarvodaya health centre for all their support and guidance in Jaipur; the Wellcome Trust, an independent charity, for funding the field research; and Geert De Neve, Filippo Osella, Katy Gardner and an anonymous referee for their useful comments.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

I
Introduction

The article focuses on decisions surrounding pregnancy and childbirth and related notions of health and healing, especially as connected with women's bodies, to understand how a group of women in Darana *basti* (slum)[1] in Jaipur perceive, experience and negotiate the cultural and economic transformations in their lives. I am especially concerned to understand how the reproductive identities of a particular group of poor, displaced women are shaped and imagined. As we shall see, migration has played an important, albeit ambivalent, role. While I focus on reproduction in its biological and social sense, I do not regard it as a set of bounded, distinct phenomena but rather as inseparably connected to conditions of poverty and the social and cultural inequalities specific to the contexts in which people live. In this sense, *basti* women's reproductive identities cannot be understood apart from the impoverished conditions and the gender inequalities which frame their daily lives. The migration experiences of Darana women emerge as two interrelated concerns: with debt and its repayment on the one hand, and with the bearing, birthing and nurturing of children on the other. These concerns are brought together here by a focus on the relationship between migration and reproductive agency in a context of medical pluralism.

Exploring what Appadurai calls de-territorialisation[2] (its local rather than global sense), this article attempts to understand how the world on the move affects small geographical and cultural spaces (1991: 205).[3] Appadurai, reflecting on the kind of ethnography needed to capture ordinary lives today, sugests that 'ethnography must redefine itself as that practice of representation which illuminates the power of large scale, imagined life possibilities over specific life trajectories' (ibid.: 200). It must be a description which is 'thick but with a difference', a thickness

[1] I use the local term *basti* instead of the word 'slum' to avoid the negative connotations of the term for English speakers. Fictitious names have been used for the *basti* and people described in this article as a means of protecting their identities There was a tangible fear of disclosure which the *basti* inhabitants expressed to me.

[2] Appadurai uses the term de-territorialisation to refer to the ways in which ethnic, sectarian and political groups and not just multinational corporations and financial flows have begun to move beyond territorial boundaries and identities (1991: 191).

[3] As far as I am aware, there is hardly any work on migration within India from a cultural perspective, and what exists is the earlier sociological work on intra-national agrarian and industrial labour migration (Breman 1985, for example).

which is imbued with the awareness that lives are not only powered by the givenness of things but by the possibilities that the media suggest are available (ibid.). The role of the imagination thus occupies a central place in this story of globalisation for, as Appadurai and others urge us to consider (for example, Ferguson 1999; Moore 1994; Parry and De Neve, this volume), it is the scope for the alternative imaginings of individuals and groups which has changed with the experience of modernity.[4] In the article, this emerges in the diferent ways in which women begin to conceptualise their reproductive possibilities, even though their actual practices may not fully reflect this.

While the focus on changing views of the world and related aspirations is a very important aspect of understanding the connections between migration and modernity, at the same time the existence of widespread migration both inside and outside India in pre-colonial times questions the radical modernity of the experience of displacement (Van der Veer 1995: 4). The experience of displacement at any historical period also involves another kind of engagement, with that of 'place'. Imaginings of self interrelate with what Feld and Basso (1996) have called 'senses of place'[5] because, as Basso suggests, 'place-based thoughts about the self lead commonly to thoughts about other things—other places, other people, other times, whole networks of associations that ramify unaccountably within the expanding spheres of awareness that they themselves engender' (1996: 55). For the women and men who come to live in the city from the villages in Rajasthan, their sense of place has to be renegotiated and reconnected to the self in significant ways.

In this article I describe how a group of 'displaced'[6] women in the Darana *basti* in Jaipur imagine and negotiate their reproductive identities

[4] Here I draw on Arce and Long's definition of modernity as it is distinguished from the notion of modernisation. For them, modernity can be understood as 'the new or emerging here-and-now materialities, meanings and cultural styles seen in relation to the notion of some past state of things', while modernisation is defined as 'a comprehensive package of technical and institutional measures aimed at widespread societal transformation and underpinned by neo-evolutionary theoretical narratives' (2000: 2).

[5] In their important edited volume, Feld and Basso (1996: 11) argue for an ethnography of the cultural construction of geographical realities, involving 'an enquiry into the experiential and expressive ways places are known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested; and the multiple ways places are metonymically and meta-phorically tied to identities'.

[6] I use the word 'displaced' in quotation marks to highlight the multiple meanings of the word, for example that it is the dominant experience of women as wives to experience displacement at the time of marriage, or as is the case here, where I refer to their migration along with their husbands

not only vis-à-vis their kinsmen and women, but equally in relation to the state and private health sectors which dominate the health care context in the city. A significant difference from the village for Darana women was their greater proximity to public as well as private (formal and informal) health services. The easy physical access to biomedical services was accompanied by a simultaneous increase in the spatial distance from the healers of their kin community. Given the greater opportunities women had for waged employment in the city and their increased role in household decision-making, one would expect Darana women's consumption of biomedical health services to increase overall. While this was the case for non-reproductive matters, I found that local healers remained the primary sources of advice in the case of gynaecological and obstetric difficulties. While a far greater number of private, biomedical practitioners were consulted in the slum than in the village for frequent illnesses such as colds, fevers, stomach upsets, body aches and dizziness, spiritual healers and local birth attendants provided the mainstay of women's fertility related care. Private gynaecologists were also sought, but frequently alongside local healers or after the local cures proved ineffective. Thus, a consequence of their migration was that women were able to consult with a wide range of healers and doctors: those based in the *basti* they lived in, the medical and local knowledge-based practitioners in their affinal and natal villages (or cities), as well as the more established healers in the region.

There has been a significant growth of the private health industry in India over the past two decades (Bhat 1993), to the extent that, in practice, the informal and formal private sector play a much greater role than the state in framing women's reproductive choices, health experiences and outcomes. As I suggest here, the two are related: the resort to private health care from biomedical practitioners enables both women and men to ignore or avoid state services. Here the resort to private health care can be regarded as forming a part of a strategy of avoidance where private clinics offer the poor an opportunity to go elsewhere than to the state-run facilities (also see Spencer's discussion of state avoidance in this volume). The rural-urban migration of women facilitates another kind of avoidance as well. Living and working in the city allows women to have direct access to health care services, often unknown to their husbands or relatives. Women are thereby able to realise some of their desires in relation to their own bodies.

Friendship among women of different caste or sub-caste groups (an often overlooked aspect in early studies on social relationships in India)

is of material and emotional significance, especially for married women in Rajasthan, and is not necessarily a product of rural-urban migration alone (Lambert 2000; Unnithan-Kumar 1997). However as I argue here, friendships, especially among women in the *basti*, are particularly important in matters of childbirth; this is in contrast to the village where kinswomen are more centrally involved. In the *basti* support in childcare or companionship during visits to healers for reproductive complications become defining features of the friendship between women. The *basti* also provides a greater opportunity for conjugal intimacy and joint husband-wife decision-making around childbirth and health care. Such new-found intimacy, I find, allows for greater intervention of the practical realities (such as the lack of access to sufficient food, income and space) in men's and women's desires for children, thus challenging more conventional reproductive behaviour. As women's identities here and elsewhere in Rajasthan are linked to the capacity to bear children, a change in conceptualising the 'need' for children thus transforms the ways in which motherhood is experienced and imagined. I would imagine that this tendency to modify the expectations linked to childbearing will only increase for the younger generation of Darana women who have the added advantage of being educated (although the correlation between education and reproductive agency may not be a direct one as Jeffrey and Jeffrey's work in UP [1997] and my own work among rural Muslim women in Rajasthan [2001] have shown).

Taken together, conjugal, caste-based relationships and the friendship and support among women of different castes were important in realising the aspirations of selfhood and motherhood which lay at the heart of the reproductive choices of Darana men and women. At the same time, the greater load of household work and childcare for Darana women was directly a result of there being fewer female kin to help out, as compared to the village. Darana women's agency in matters of health and reproduction was crucially connected to the poverty they faced. The greater immediacy of poverty in the *basti* was most noticeable in their lack of direct access to food, and physically in terms of an increase in domestic work. Poverty-related malnutrition combined with greater domestic work in significantly restricting women's reproductive choices. Migration for Darana women is thus experienced in ambivalent terms, involving both reproductive freedom (from wider kin group participation in decisions about chilbirth; in the expanded choice of healers and medical practitioners; in resisting the control exerted by affinal healers), and also reproductive control (through their engagement with processes of medicalisation

within the city; restrictions in access and mobility because of the lack of support from female kin).

Ambivalent experiences related to migration are also a focus of other recent studies on women migrants and workers (notably Johnson 1998; Mills 1997; Ram 1998). Mills (1997), for example, writing about the labour mobility of rural Thai women to Bangkok, describes the tensions faced by young unmarried women aspiring to live up to two contrasting constructions of the self: to be 'modern' (*than samay* or up-to-date) women by spending on themselves; and to fulfil the role of being a 'good daughter', which primarily entails fulfilling family expectations of remittances, living frugally and behaving modestly.[7] For Ram, describing the impact of state reproductive health reform measures on Mukkuvar fishing women in Tamil Nadu, the ambivalence emerges as two contradictory strains: on the one hand to become subjects who will undertake responsibility for their own reproductive outcomes; on the other hand to accept their inferiority as poor, illiterate women and their related incapacity to act, as assumed by the reformers (1998: 128). What emerges from these studies is that these women are nevertheless able to address their predicament in various ways by making choices which are determined by the specific interplay between the two aspects of their personhood and individual circumstances. For instance in the Thai case (Mills 1997), short-term strategies include religious merit-making trips, while longer-term prospects include opening shops in the village or acquiring further education to ensure gainful employment and some control over household finances. Much like the women in these studies, Darana women are constantly negotiating better (reproductive) outcomes for themselves which are both consonant to some extent with what is expected of them, and at the same time partially satisfy their own aspirations. Where exactly these boundaries of agency and expectation lie and how these are worked out by individual women can only be illuminated by ethnographic enquiry, as described below. In what follows, I consider three separated yet interrelated contexts in which Darana women respond to the ambivalences posed by their migration: (*a*) family

[7] As Mills shows, ties with the village remain important for young Thai women and it is, therefore, not easy to ignore the expectations of kin for women to be good daughters. The tension between the two constructions of the self are never fully resolved, as decisions to choose between following one or the other desire are extremely difficult, given that women want to fulfil their ambitions of being modern (which drew them to the city in the first place), but also seek to return to the village to marry and set up home after the migration period.

negotiations around childbearing and domestic work; (*b*) the friendship between women across castes, especially in their quest for conception and their recourse to healers; and finally, (*c*) in women's engagement with the state's programme of family planning and their strategic use of biomedical and public health services.

II
Darana basti

Darana *basti* is located to the south-east of Jaipur city and is built around a disused stone quarry. In 1998 the *basti* was over thirty years' old, having been designated as a settlement by the city's municipal authorities in the 1960s. It is a large *basti* of approximately 3,500 households, distributed over eleven sections and covering an area of approximately 30 square kilometres. A majority of the residents of Darana come from the villages and cities outlying Jaipur up to a distance of around 500–600 kilometres. There is a combination of residents who have migrated directly from the villages, and those who are twice migrants, from villages other than their own or from other *basti*s in the city. In general, women could be twice or thrice migrants, depending on whether they were married before their husbands migrated in search of employment. In addition, there was a small number of younger women for whom Darana was their natal home or who married young men in Darana.

Members of around twenty one different communities live in Darana, mainly the lower and Scheduled Castes (Koli, Berwa, Mahawar, Khateek, Balai, Regar, Dhanka, Harijan) and Scheduled 'Tribes' (dominantly Meena),[8] but also include around 400 households from the middle and upper castes (such as the Rajput, Brahmin, Baniya, Kumhar, Mali, Dhobi, Luhar). Overall, in Darana, there is a dominance of Scheduled Caste groups who operate their own hierarchy in terms of their 'traditional' occupations. In local classifications of the Scheduled Caste hierarchy, the Regar rank third in an order which places the Khateek on top, followed by the Chamar or Dhanka. After the Regar come the Bhangi or Harijan and finally, the Santhiya or Sansi, also referred to as the ***bhangiyon ke bhangi*** (or the most 'untouchable' of the 'untouchables'). Occupation-wise, the Khateek are associated with the cutting and selling of goat meat and the Chamar with shoe-making, but not with the skinning of

[8] Tribal classifications in Rajasthan have been contested, as I have urged elsewhere for the Girasia (Unnithan-Kumar 1997), and I therefore use this category with scepticism.

dead animals, which is left to the Regar. The Bhangi are known to work on any jobs related to dead animals, and dominate the municipal category of sweepers and gutter cleaners in the city. The Santhiya are considered to be at the bottom of the hierarchy because, I was told, 'they live on charity, eat carcasses and have no fixed dwelling'. These families would most often be associated with rag-picking in the city. In Darana, most of the castes above the Dhanka and Regar would find work as wage labourers, or be employed in the domestic or government service sector.

Most residents who came to Darana in the early 1990s found work in the stone quarry site around the slum. For men there was work in cutting stones and loading them onto trucks for transportation all over the state. Women were employed to collect and carry stone chips and gravel from the site of production to the loading areas. Since the mid-1990s, mining in the quarry areas was banned, mainly because of the erosion of the solid rock foundation and depletion of stone reserves. As a result, most of the families lost their source of livelihood. Most men sought alternative employment in local building or industry and younger men, especially, frequented the daily wage labour market. A number of men were reduced to dependence on their wives, who sought employment as domestic servants in middle-class households in the surrounding colonies.

A significant factor of differentiation between residents was in terms of their accommodation, that is, whether it was *pucca* (made of bricks and cement) or *kucca* (temporary, made of sand, tin and loose stones). The *pucca/kucca* distinction also served to distinguish those who had a permanent or proven association with the place (a *pucca* identity), compared to the potential transience (*kucca* nature) of the more recent residents. The *pucca* houses were symbols of legitimate resident status as their owners had been given permission to reside and build houses in the slum by the municipal authorities. In comparison, the *kucca* houses were illegal structures. *Kucca* house residents lived constantly under the threat of demolition notices issued by the municipal authorities. They also had no legal access to electricity and water supplies and depended on whatever facilities the legitimate residents could provide them.

Both *pucca* and *kucca* house owners, however, shared the common experience of living in cramped one-bed accommodation, most often accompanied by poor drainage facilities. Also, they shared the same experiences of hardship which had brought them to the *basti* in the first place. Most of the residents I met in Darana had come to the *basti* on account of the economic hardships caused by the pressure of large families on small landholdings, or by being forced off their land as a result of

indebtedness to the village moneylenders. Feelings about the loss of living space emerged in Darana residents' references to their loss of control over food production and as a loss of the ability to keep livestock. In Rajasthan, where land is scarce and unproductive, cattle and goats are considered to be the most significant source of income and sustenance. In fact, work on the indicators of drought-related poverty suggest that once livestock are sold or slaughtered for food, the downward spiral of poverty is almost irreversible (Jodha 2001). Not being able to have direct control over food production generates a tremendous sense of anxiety for residents in Darana, and especially for those who depend on daily wages. Daily meals in these households usually consist of sweet tea for breakfast; unleavened bread packed with an onion or chilly to be consumed at work during the day, with a few rupees to drink tea and smoke a local cigarattee; and unleavened bread or wheat porridge for dinner. A vegetable accompaniment signifies a good day's earning. Rice, milk and milk products are considered luxuries.

Given the overall low and fluctuating consumption of nutritious food and hard physical labour, the health of Darana women, men and children was poor, although it is difficult to estimate this without a detailed survey of the nutritional intake. Nevertheless, in 1998 I was able to get an idea of the demographic context of the *basti* from the accounts and reproductive histories of thirty-nine Darana women. This study was a small part of a wider study which focused on the reproductive health perceptions and strategies of poor rural Hindu and Muslim women (Unnithan-Kumar 1999, 2001). Comparing the figures for rural and *basti* women (see Table 1), I found that for Darana women the onset of menarche (first menstrual period) was slightly earlier than for the village women. As poor women in Rajasthan commence childbirth shortly after their menarche, the observation implies that Darana women become mothers at a slightly earlier age than women from the same caste in the villages. *Basti* and village women tend to share the same birth intervals of 1.5 to two years in the category of those women who had four or more children. Also, in both cases, approximately 15–18 per cent of the women had a high birth interval of between five to nine years (mainly due to the high prevalence of reproductive tract infections). As far as the figures on reported infant mortality were concerned, roughly the same number of infant deaths under the age of five occurred in the *basti* as in the village. Approximately a third of the *basti* women were also found to have a slightly higher rate of miscarriages of around four babies, compared to village women. The higher maternal morbidity and infant mortality in

Darana can perhaps be explained by three factors: (*a*) the greater work burden, given fewer women to share domestic tasks in the *basti*; (*b*) the relatively restricted access to adequate nutrition when compared to village women, given the similar gender ideologies by which women deny themselves food in both contexts; and (*c*) poor water supply, drainage and sanitation facilities in the *basti*, which place great constraints on women in ensuring hygiene during menstruation and childbirth.

Table 1
Demographic information for 39 Darana women and 50 rural women from the nearby villages, several villages of which formed the natal or affinal villages of Darana women

	Darana Women	*Village Women*
Menarche*	12–15 years	14–16 years
Age of mother at 1st birth	16–21 years	15–18 years
More than 4 children	58%	39%
Miscarriages**	24%	36%
Infant Mortality:***		
0–1 year	82%	77%
1–5 years	50%	48%

Source: *Primary fieldwork data*, Jaipur 1998, 2000.
Notes: * marriage takes place shortly (and not longer than a year) after menarche.
** Darana women had a higher number of miscarriages per person (up to 4) compared to the women from the villages (who had mostly up to two miscarriages each).
*** As measured for 32 per cent of the total number of Darana women, and 45 per cent rural women respectively, who were the women who reported cases of infant mortality from the wider sample

It is difficult to make any conclusive demographic observations on such a small data set, especially because of the inclusion of women who were twice or thrice migrant and, therefore, lived in Darana for very different periods of time. However, it is interesting to note that there appears to be no indication of even a slight improvement in demographic terms for Darana women over their relatives who live in the villages. As I go on to suggest, this poor overall demographic picture is contrary to the qualitative increase I found in women's reproductive agency, particularly in terms of their resort to a wider range of health services. I see this disjunction between the demographic indicators and women's greater role in reproductive decision-making and health-seeking behaviour to be related to the greater immediacy of poverty experienced by the families

who live in the *basti*, compounded by a high recourse to a low quality of biomedical care.

III
Bare ankles, empty womb: Debt, infertility and Vimla's journey to Darana

In 1998, 34-year-old Vimla was looking for a job as a child-carer when I first met her. Her husband was in poor health and she had been unsuccessful in finding long-term employment outside the daily wage labour market. Vimla and her husband and twin daughters had lived in Darana *basti* for the past seven years. They had come there in search of employment to pay off debts. According to Vimla:

> Debts (*karza*) decide where we live. I was fifteen or sixteen years of age when I was married to Ramji and went to live in his village in Tonk which is around 80 km from here. For the wedding my father gave us half a kilo of silver from which I got a marriage necklace (*mangalsutra*), two bangles, toe rings, earrings, waistband and a waistband key ring, made. We got a sewing machine, radio and tape recorder and a watch for my husband. My in-laws also gave us half a kilo of silver from which we made a neckband and anklets. Six years later all this jewellery was sold for approximately Rs 7,000–8,000 to make up a sum of Rs 40,000 which we owed to three moneylenders in the village. This sum of Rs 40,000 was the debt we had inherited from my father-in-law (my husband's three other brothers had an equal amount of debt on them). We had nothing more to give so we started working in the construction industry (*chunai-eenth ka kaam*) in Delhi. My parents live there and we were able to get some support there. We were able to send money back to my husband's village from our earnings and were also able to convert around Rs 8,000 into anklets. You see married women must wear anklets.
>
> It was when my father-in-law died five years ago that I sold my anklets to the silversmith and we gave up our land in the village to the money-lender. We had to because we were faced by a debt of Rs 20,000. I didn't have any anklets for a long time after that. These ones you see me wearing now were given by my father at the time of my brother's wedding last year because I participated in the door stopping ceremony. Then two years ago my mother-in-law died and we

> had to meet all the funeral expenditure. Barely a year later my husband's elder brother died, leaving a debt of Rs 16,000 on each of the remaining brothers which we are still paying off. The interests rates (*byaj*) are high, we pay around Rs 3 for every 100 rupees owed. Nowadays I get Rs 1,500 every month but then we pay back for Rs 5,000 every month, so you work out how much it comes to. Ramji has very intermittent work and has to go long distances now to get work in breaking stones (*pattheron ka kam*). This is my life, *didi* (sister), what can I do.

For Vimla, it was not so much a question of getting over or out of debt, for she had always lived in debt and saw herself continuing to do so over her lifetime. Rather it was a question of how to manage the level of debt so that life and survival could continue. That is, to keep the level of debt low enough so that there was enough to eat at home and, if possible, to send at least one of her twin girls regularly to school. In 2001, when I met Vimla again, her debts had come down to Rs 10,000–11,000. According to Vimla, she will be in debt wherever she goes; the main thing is to have a means of earning money to repay these debts. Before the twins were born, both Vimla and her husband worked in Delhi (around 300 km from Jaipur) as daily wage labourers on construction sites. They earned enough then to repay their debts. They would have continued there if Vimla's father-in-law had not become ill. They came to Jaipur and Darana slum to be close to her father-in-law when he became ill. They chose to live in Darana because there was no possibility of employment in the village. The scarcity of water in the village meant that farming was not sufficient to survive on, let alone to make any money to repay their debts. So, of Ramji's three brothers, the eldest and youngest remained on their land while Ramji and his elder brother sought employment in Jaipur and Kota respectively. Darana slum in Jaipur was where Ramji had contacts through the neighbours in his village:

> A Pandit (of the brahman caste) and the son of a Nai (of the barber caste) live next door to my husband. The Pandit was a truck driver who was familiar with the area and work around Darana. First he took my husband Ramji there to work in the quarry. Ramji would work on the site during the day and sleep in the stone transport truck during the night. I joined him when the twins were two and a half years old. We first rented a room for a month. Then there was a man, a Khati (of the carpenter caste), who left Darana to go back to his village when

> his parents died. He sold us his plot in the *basti* for Rs 7,700. We bought this plot by furthering our debt.

Interspersed with the account of her indebtedness, were Vimla's concerns relating to children and her attempts to overcome her inability to conceive since the birth of her twin girls in Delhi nine years earlier. Since then she had consulted with numerous healers and doctors to no avail: 'Because of all the work I do, my body is drying up, I can't produce enough blood, I am becoming all black in colour. People occasionally call me *bhanjh* (sterile) and my mother-in-law has also suggested to my husband to get another wife.' During her seven years in Darana, Vimla has been consumed by the desire to have another child. When I asked her which was worse, being in debt and impoverished or being unable to conceive, she replied that her poverty was a greater burden but something that she could at least do something about, something that might one day change. Her childlessness was more out of her control than her indebtedness. But these anxieties were also interrelated—Vimla felt that she would not want to burden her children with large debts which they would never be able to repay. As Vimla's story so clearly shows, debt, kinship and child-bearing are inextricably entwined.

IV
Health related ambivalences of migration in Rajasthan

Conjugal responsibility and reproductive decisions

The most significant difference for married women in Darana, compared to their life 'back home', is that they have fewer female kin of the same generation residing with them. Hearthholds in Darana usually consist of parents and children, with possibly one or two elders, or single siblings of the parents who often stay for a short while until they find employment and alternative accommodation. The cramped accommodation in the slum, where having two rooms is a luxury, makes it difficult for additional members to stay. The lack of a female support group has consequences in terms of the ability to meet the demands of domestic work, of childcare and of support in times of illness, as well as in terms of companionship. In all these instances women are expected to shoulder the major burden of domestic (including health care related) work themselves. There is, however, an important shift in gender roles and relations as a result of

the changed living circumstances. This is the possibility of greater companionship and work-sharing between women and their husbands. One of the distinct features of men in Darana is that they all have some skills for domestic work. I was told by the women that the men had learned to cook and take care of their clothes as many had previously lived on their own in their earlier migration to the city. According to Vimla, Ramji can prepare not only *roti-subzi* (unleavened bread and vegetables) for the daily meal, but can also make good *halwa-poori* (sweetmeats) for special occasions. He might cook when Vimla is away in the village or when she gets held up at work. But now that their twin girls are old enough, they prepare the food under Ramji's instructions. Ramji also takes care of the children and washes their clothes when Vimla leaves for work in winter before it is warm enough to bathe.

The generally accepted notion that all men in Darana have engaged in domestic work as a consequence of their migration makes it easier for individual men to perform these tasks. The absence of female relatives to perform these tasks makes men's roles even more important and valued, while the fact that fewer male relatives are around puts less pressure on the men performing tasks which may otherwise be seen as detracting from their 'manliness'. Specific male pursuits are the consumption of alcohol, gambling and smoking. (Although several women may also smoke, they usually deny that they do so.) Men are given much more leeway than women in expressing their emotions, and bad tempered behaviour and related quarrels are not uncommon. The accepted characteristic male behaviour in the *basti* is not very different from that in the villages, I was told. A lot, however, also depends on the individual character of the men. Ramji has a good nature and rarely gets angry. According to Vimla, Ramji may get annoyed with her 'maybe once in a hundred days, and only when I say how will we buy this thing, or bring that thing, where is the money for this, like that'. Other women may not be so fortunate.[9]

Decisions related to child bearing are connected to the nature of conjugal relationships, the extent of loyalty and responsibility that the couple feel towards each other, the influence of certain key relatives of the husband back in the village, the ease with which individual women carry and bear children, and notions about the value of children. In general, there seem to be three main people involved in decisions about having a

[9] Sunita, on the other hand, is having a very bad time. Her father-in-law is lecherous and her husband beats her. She has tried to run back to her own family but her husband has threatened to kill her if she does that.

child. These are the couple and the husband's mother. If the husband and his mother disagree in their views, the couple will try to make her understand their position. This is a slow process. As one woman explained to me,

> On a visit to the village my mother-in-law may say 'why don't you give your son a sister, or give your daughter a brother', like that. Then if I don't want to have any more children, I say this to her. I say I have enough, or they are too painful to bear. I could say, I want an 'operation' (tubectomy) done. Then my mother-in-law will say, 'what is your problem, my son is earning and giving you the money'. Then I will approach my husband and say that I don't want any more children. On our next visit to the village, he will tell this to his mother. Finally she will say, 'okay you don't want to listen to me, then go, do as you please'.

There is the widespread feeling among women that if they do not have children, they will have no one to help them when they are in sorrow (being alone, during old age, widowhood, sickness, in difficult economic circumstances). Such sentiment reinforces a strong patrilineal ideology which supports the birth of children, seen as members of their father's kin group. In Darana, mothers are happy to have girls, both for their valuable contribution to the domestic and childcare tasks, as well as for the wages from employment they can potentially bring in, but boys are still highly desired. Apart from the greater economic rewards boys may reap when they are grown up and in their function as appropriate heirs to their father's property, the birth of a boy continues to prove the 'quality' of women as mothers (women who produce boys are somehow better). In turn, childlessness for both women and men is stigmatised. Darana women who are childless are seen as incomplete persons. To counter this stigmatisation, they resort to religious and spiritual healers for a divine or sacred explanation of their condition, in order to regain their value as women (as described below). The attempt to avail of the value attached to motherhood, even though one may be unable to conceive, is a necessary and strategic measure employed by women in Darana.[10]

[10] The strategic recourse of Darana women to a wider legitimising ideology is similar to the practices of North American and European women described in Layne's work (1999). According to Layne (1999), childless women in North America and Europe find that recourse to the language of 'the gift' in the commodity driven cultures in which

Alongside notions which attributed central value to women who bear children, I found that for Darana women, their previous experiences of the actual process of birthing also play an important role in their decisions about the number of children and contraceptive use. It was commonly believed in Darana that women who have painless births do not mind bearing several children. It is usually those women who have painful births or difficult gestatory periods who choose terminal methods of contraception after two or three children. While husbands and family members may be involved in decisions regarding appropriate family size and tubectomies, as revealed by the example above, other reproductive decisions for purposes of spacing births, such as going in for early abortions (around fifteen to twenty days after conception) or fitting the Copper T intra-uterine contraceptive device, may be hidden from them. For example, several of Vimla's acquaintances in Darana, especially those who were believed to 'conceive rapidly' (*jinka bachha jaldi lagta hai*) had resorted to the Copper T for a year or so, without the knowledge or permission of their husbands. As the Copper T is inserted at the end of tne menstrual period, the bleeding that follows its insertion is explained by the women to their husbands as a prolonged menstrual period. I was told that these kind of hidden (*chupke*) actions were possible in the cities where doctors abound and where it is acceptable for women to travel long distances either alone or with friends. By contrast, there are few medical facilities in the village and it is difficult for a woman to travel on her own or with women of her choosing.

As a consequence of living in the city, Darana women thus seemed to have a more direct (less mediated through affinal relatives) relationship with their husbands both in terms of the division of domestic chores, as well as in terms of the decisions relating to health care. At the same time, women were more easily able to resort to reproductive health services without the knowledge of their husbands. This was particularly so in cases of early abortions or in the use of intra-uterine devices to delay conception. In these matters, the support of friends, of women from one's own and other castes and sometimes men from one's own family, was vital.

---

they live enables them to gain value and counter the stigma (characterised as productlessness) of their inability to attain motherhood (at all, or through appropriate methods). Thus foster-mothers are gifted mothers, while surrogate mothers are gifting mothers, giving children as gifts.

Spirits, conception, and relationships across caste

Darana women were brought together in their hardships, which were manifest in the daily fluctuation in their food supplies compared to the seasonal fluctuations in the village, the lack of nutrition, particularly for women during their pregnancies, in the difficulties of menstruating and managing menstruation in cramped spaces, in their resistance to family pressures on childbearing and in their avoidance of the state's efforts at encouraging them to undertake family planning (as described in the section below). Relationships in the *basti* were in contrast to the ties the current generation of middle-aged women in Darana had with their extended kin in their villages. While ties with extended kin were strong, and reinforced during the frequent visits to attend marriages, childbirth and funerals, friendship relationships across caste were also significant in Darana. I was told, '*jath alag ho sakta hai, pur mun/dil bhi dekha jata hai*' (castes may be separate but the mind/heart of the person is also considered).

Raj Kanwar is a close friend of Vimla. She lives next door to Vimla and belongs to the Rajput caste. Raj Kanwar and her husband and his brother came to Darana around twelve to thirteen years ago, from Jhalawar (approximately 550 km from Jaipur), where their father and two other brothers still work. The two brothers who live in the *basti* went on to specialise in the work of tiling. Over the years they have done well and now employ five to six people to work under them. Their work takes them all over the state, up to Delhi in the North and Ahmedabad in the South. They live well in the slum and have fair savings as well. Vimla values her association with Raj Kanwar. She tells me how she and her friend Raj Kanwar share the same ideas and experiences. Raj Kanwar has two daughters and a son, who is as young as Vimla's son. The two women drink tea together, but won't eat with, or marry into each other's families. What they do most frequently is share information about healers and reproductive methods concerning childbirth. They also go together to seek advice from healers outside the city. More regularly they travel together to the healer in Berwada (approximately 150 km) to pay respects during the period of *Chauth* each month. During *Chauth* women across castes and classes in Rajasthan undertake fasting to ensure their fertility and the health and prosperity of their husbands. Both rural and urban women, and those who are poor as well as those who are better off, share a universe of gods, goddesses, spirits and healers, which is clearly manifest in fertility beliefs and practices and such major regional festivals as

Holi, Gangaur, Shivratri and Teej, as well as in the weekly observances of *vrat* (fasting). Spiritual healers are particularly sought for curing illness caused by evil winds (manifest by the sudden onset of a rise or fall in body temperature). The winds (*hava*) generally represent dissatisfied spirits who have themselves had unfortunate or tragic ends to their lives and who come to inhabit marginal places (such as crossroads) where there is danger and impurity. These winds are particularly dangerous for women who, due to their reproductive functions, are considered to be in recurring states of impurity. The evil winds take on a specific guise in the form of the *nazar* or evil eye, associated with the ill-feelings of jealousy and envy, and the main explanation given locally for the high levels of infant mortality.

Vimla visited several healers with Raj Kanwar in her effort to have another child. She also undertook a fertility treatment course at the voluntary health centre where I was based. When I met Vimla again in 2000, she had finally become pregnant after eleven years. I was surprised to find that she attributed her pregnancy neither to the cross-caste healers visited with Raj Kanwar, nor completely to the interventions of the gynaecologist at the health centre. According to her:

> Prakash, my son, came to me as a gift from *devta* (sacred being, spirit). This *devta* was Dada, the spirit of my dead uncle in-law (*sasur ke chacha;* father-in-law's uncle) who died childless. Dada began entering my body around five months before my girls were born, eleven years ago. He only appears when we go the village (Vimla's husband's village). And we only go to the village when there is a need, when someone falls ill or when there is a wedding, or someone dies, like that. We go to bow our heads to him (*dokne ke liye*). This particular time, my *jethani* (husband's elder brother's wife) asked Dada (when I was possessed by him) for a brother for my girls. Shortly after this I conceived Prakash. I had taken only one dose of the medicine from the health centre and didn't take any more. Well I knew that I had conceived by then, that Dada had given me a child by then. Okay, it may have been a combination of both Dada's and the health centre medicine, who is to say?

Vimla attributed her pregnancy to the power of Dada, her husband's dead male relative. Vimla could have also consulted with Sita or Khataram

who were healers in the *basti*, and whom she and Raj Kanwar had consulted previously. Sita was one of six spiritual healers who lived in Darana. She was the only female spiritual healer in the *basti* and the youngest that I had come across in the region (she was between 25 and 30 years old). Sita belonged to the Meena caste and lived in the same *gali* (narrow street) as Vimla. She was regularly possessed by the spirit of the 'seven sisters' (*sathu behna*, more popularly referred to as *matamai*), ever since she came to live with her husband in Darana ten to eleven years ago. Sita had four children and lived in *pucca* accommodation. Every Wednesday which was either a *sate* or *chaudus* (seventh or fourteenth day after the new moon), a large crowd gathered outside the shrine built in the courtyard of her house. Sita donned the robes of the *mata*, enabling her body to be 'entered' by the *devta* (spirit of *mata*), who suggested cures and remedies especially for the afflictions of women and children. Sita worked closely with Dori, one of the most popular 'village' midwives in the *basti*, thereby reinforcing the close association made in local perceptions between childbirth and spiritual intervention.

Dori was around 46 years of age and had been in Darana for the past fourteen years. Dori belonged to the Regar ('untouchable') community. She claims to have delivered between fifty to a 100 children in her years at Darana, as well as around fifty children in her village before she came to the *basti*. In Darana, she was known for treating cases of infertility. According to Dori,

> If women have a problem with childlessness, then Sita sends them to me. I believe all women who menstruate can become mothers. What happens is, the pulse (*nus*) can get shifted around, so I sit it down by massaging the stomach (*peth soothna*) over three days. Then for three days the woman has to eat *halva* made of wheat flour and then she has to 'meet/talk to' (*milna/bolna*; i.e., have sex) with her husband regularly.

According to Dori, a child is made by the mixing of a woman's blood and the egg in men's water. While Dori had similar beliefs to the midwives I met in the village, she was much less negative about women's infertility. Like the village midwives, she also relied on private doctors to enhance deliveries by oxytocin injections (*sui*), and because there were a number of doctors set up in small private clinics on the main road near the *basti*,

they were easily accessible and resort to them formed a more routine part of the process of birthing in the *basti* than in the village (although this varied from village to village).[11] Despite the ready access to biomedical intervention and unlike the local midwives who lived in the city ('city' midwives), Dori did not perform pregnancy terminations or abortions but only diagnosed cases which required abortions (a condition locally known as the drying or *sookhna* of the foetus when a cleaning of the womb [*safai*] was considered obligatory). In such cases, Dori would refer her clients to the city midwives whom she knew. Traditional midwives, across the village and city, all believed that the cleaning of the womb ensured a healthy conception and there was little awareness that unskilled dilatation and curettage could in fact result in conditions of secondary sterility. Nevertheless, midwives like Mori helped women deliver children at home, as did village midwives, but with the added advantage of the knowledge of the kinds of gynaecological expertise that existed in the health clinics around Darana.

Vimla had been to both Sita and Dori to discuss her failure to conceive a second time, but to no avail. It was only when Dada was identified that the cause of her own and her affines' troubles became clear to her. According to Vimla:

> People of the village practise *jadi-booti* (herbal curing) and also a lot of *bhopa-bhav* (literally, shaman-trance, meaning spiritual healing). But in Darana there is lot of *bhopa bhav*. In my *gali* (narrow street), there is Sita who gets possessed by a *Mata* (female spirit). Then there is Khataram, who lives just behind Sita. He gets possessed (*bhav aana*) by Syyed Baba (a Muslim spirit). *Bhav* comes to those who are pure, that means they do not eat meat or drink alcohol. I also get *bhav*, but only in my village and only for my family, when there is a need or trouble. I only identified the *devta* (spirit) last year when I went to see a Muslim healer who has settled in the village nearby. He explained that the trouble I had been having not being able to get another child for over nine years was because I had not paid attention to the demands of this spirit. The trouble in the family, my husband's elder brother (*jeth*) had three operations and then my husband's younger brother could not beget children, are all related to this.

[11] There was a regular resort to oxytocin injections in a village on the outskirts of Jaipur city, as I have noted elsewhere (Unnithan-Kumar 2002a), but since fewer doctors were available in the village context generally, the use of oxytocin during birthing was probably not so widespread.

What emerges most significantly from Vimla's account (and from others like her; see the narratives of Ghisi and Sharda in Unnithan-Kumar 2002b), is that even though Sita and Dori are popular healers, it is those spirits and spiritual healers associated with the family who are the most powerful. Usually, these are healers in the husband's family, who are most concerned about protecting the patriarchal interest in women's reproduction and they are also the most feared of healers for women. Living in Darana and having a greater range of spiritual healers to choose from does not necessarily lead to the weakening of the powers of the village-based family healers. Vimla's case is a good example of the interplay between the control exerted by the family, and women's resistance to this. The trips with friends and possibly other kinswomen to non-family healers show how Darana women can seek recourse to other healers in their pursuit of effective techniques of conception or contraception, if they want to. Vimla's return to a known affinal spirit, but one which manifests itself in her body rather than in one of her husband's relatives, indicates her way of resolving the tension between meeting the reproductive expectations of her affines on the one hand, and working towards her desires for control over her own fertility and pregnancy on the other.

Avoiding the state

Most *basti* residents are well aware of the state in terms of its regulations on housing, water and lighting, but also as regards the health facilities that are available to them. The state health authorities have had a primary health care unit (PHC) operating near the western end of the *basti* for the last ten years. Most of the residents I met, however, frequented the eighteen or so different private health practitioners who had their small clinics mainly around the periphery of the *basti*.[12] For more serious attention *basti* residents went to one of the five to six medium to large private hospitals at a distance of a few kilometres from the *basti*. The nearest public hospital was rarely mentioned as a destination by women with pregnancy complications. The gynaecologists there were regarded as coercive and abusive of women's bodily integrity. One of the major reasons why women like Vimla did not use the health care facilities provided by the state is because the main focus of the public health

[12] I was told though that the PHC was frequently used by the few families who lived near it.

programme is on the control of fertility, rather than in addressing the widespread problem of infertility. Most of the women who are childless or suffer from secondary sterility do so as a result of unhygienic birthing and sexual practices. Even more common is the widespread problem of vaginal discharge, indicative of reproductive tract infections. Yet there are negligible services which meet this major health need of the majority of poor women, both urban and rural. Even the Primary Health Centres (PHCs) who have the capacity and the brief to address these issues prefer to focus their energies on the promotion of contraceptives. PHCs then become simply condom and IUD depots frequented by women who have had four to five children of the right mix of sexes, or by a few younger women who want to extend their immunity to conception following their period of lactation (amenorrhoea). Vimla does not use any contraceptives, although she says she does not want any more children: 'I now have a son, and we can't feed too many children'. But then her menstrual cycles have also not commenced. Prakash is soon to be three years old and she still breastfeeds him in the evenings after returning from work. When I suggested that her menstrual periods may start when she stops breast-feeding him and that she may become pregnant again, Vimla laughs and says she only becomes pregnant once every ten to eleven years and in the next round she will be too old.

Even the more routine antenatal services of the PHC were rejected, partly from the fear of control, but also because the idea of preventive maternal care is a locally underdeveloped concept. Both women and men regarded pregnancy and childbirth as 'natural' and 'normal', requiring no medical intervention to ascertain the fitness of the foetus and expectant mother. This is perhaps the most widespread form of the resistance to what Foucault has shown to be the control by the state and the medical establishment (Foucault 1981). The medicalisation of women's bodies, though, occurs most forcefully at the time of childbirth. There is a widespread belief among Darana women and men, as well as in the surrounding villages, that even when you go to a public hospital to have a child, the doctors perform tubectomies (effectively terminating women's ability to conceive). Middle-class, high-caste doctors force poor, low-caste women to undergo sterilisation with no thought for women's own choices, desires, or even their past reproductive histories (which, as in Vimla's case, may command the need for conception rather than contraception). Medicalisation is thus the result of caste as well as medical control. This is evident also in Ram's study of the relationship between

maternity and modernity in Tamil Nadu (1998). According to Ram, Mukkuvar fishing women tended to use state antenatal services as far as check-ups were concerned, but did not go to public hospitals for childbirth mainly because they feared apathy and condescension from the Naddar women who were birth attendants. (The Naddar community of toddy tappers were higher in the caste hierarchy than the Mukkuvar whom they regarded as inferior.)

Thus poverty, caste, class and state medical control all combine to violate women's sense of bodily integrity. In fact, international agencies have been known to add a further layer of control. Deepa Dhanraj's film, *Something Like a War*, is a powerful testimony to this (Dhanraj 1992). Here both the national government, the medical establishment and international aid agencies are implicated in the mass violation of women's rights to reproduction.[13]

In contrast to the public hospitals, the private health clinics were considered 'safe', that is, powerless to impose medical intervention on women's bodies. It was on the basis of this criterion, rather than the quality of care they offered, that private health clinics were considered better and were most frequented by Darana women, although the private doctors whom Darana women could afford often had dubious medical qualifications.[14] Also, these clinics were often run by male doctors who did not offer any gynaecological or obstetric health services. Thus, as far as the attention required for their reproductive health was concerned, in terms of antenatal and post-partum care and access to professional gynaecological expertise and services, Darana women's desires were unfulfilled: they fell between the services acceptable from the state and those provided by the formal private sector. In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising to observe that women continue to depend on local healers.

Both village and *basti* women shared the tendency to frequently engage in spiritual healing practices and non-allopathic cures which were perceived to be generally most effective. Also, like the village women I met, Darana women did not seek any antenatal or post-natal health care

[13] Elsewhere (Unnithan-Kumar 2002b) I have written about the nature of this disjunction between the 'global' and 'local' discourse on reproductive rights.

[14] The qualifications of the doctors were difficult to ascertain as they were unavailable for interviews. Given the fact that there were hardly any doctors who even used the RMP (registered medical practitioner) qualification, which only requires an application form and money to be sent in, it may be surmised that their qualifications to practise medicine were inadequate or even based on false claims.

services. In fact, Darana women were observed to have less of an awareness of health programmes and services (especially relating to antenatal care and child immunisation) compared to village women. This is because public campaigns are directed towards women and men in rural areas in the belief that urbanisation and the related access to education and health services would automatically translate into better reproductive and child health outcomes (NFHS 1998, 1999; see GOI 2000). But, even though Darana women consulted more frequently with allopathic doctors, the poor qualifications of the private doctors meant that their enhanced resort to private health care as a result of migration was not necessarily to their benefit.

V
Conclusion

Through a detailed description of the lives of a few women in Darana *basti*, I have discussed the ambivalent effects of migration on women's reproductive desires, constraints and agency in Jaipur, north-west India. Poor women's migration brings both reproductive freedom in terms of their access to greater public and private health services, and at the same time submits women to state-sponsored biomedical control. Their migration provides a break from wider village and kin decision-making groups and a shift to more conjugally-based and friendship-based relationships. Although women in the *basti* have a greater role in reproductive decision-making, the demographic indicators show them to be actually worse off than their kinswomen in the village. This is largely because of the greater immediacy of poverty faced in the urban context, alongside the recourse to a very poor quality of biomedical care. The negative biomedical experiences contribute to women's dependence on local healers. *Basti* women continue to consult with village healers and ascribe to cultural ideas and reproductive and bodily practices which are rooted in the context of the village. Women resolve the reproductive tensions generated by their migration in various ways, depending on their individual circumstances of poverty and their physical experiences of pain during childbirth. Children are desired by women in the village and *basti* alike, both because sterility continues to be a great social sigma, but also because children can alleviate personal, mental and material suffering. But when the bearing of children is accompanied by great hardship and pain, then women can legitimately claim, if not secretly resort to, relief from the cycle of

childbirth. There is thus a selective resort to opportunities for tubectomy or the use of contraceptives. The continued intervention of spiritual healers, reinforced by the unpredictable nature of conception itself, is used by childless couples (or those having fewer children than culturally desired) as a means of displacing the stigma of childlessness away from themselves, allowing women in particular greater opportunities for individual manipulation of their fertility. Darana women's resort to a range of spiritual healers who are not close kin ensures that their wombs are less controlled by patrilineal kin and reflects the ways in which, through their 'displacement', Darana women are able to negotiate familial and state authority over their bodies.

REFERENCES

APPADURAI, A. 1991. Global ethnoscapes: Notes and queries for a transnational anthropology. *In* R.G. Fox, ed., *Recapturing anthropology Working in the present*, pp. 191–210. New Mexico: School of American Research Press.

ARCE, A. and N. LONG. 2000. *Anthropology, development and modernities: Exploring discourses, counter-tendencies and violence.* London: Routledge.

BASSO, K. 1996. Wisdom sits in places: Notes on a western Apache landscape. *In* S. Feld and K. Basso, eds., *Senses of place*, pp. 53–91. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

BHAT, R. 1993. The private/public mix in healthcare in India. *Health policy and planning* 8, 1: 43–56.

BREMAN, J. 1985. *Of peasants, migrants and paupers. Rural labour circulation and capitalist production in west India.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

DHANRAJ, D. 1992. *Something like a war.* Video film made on the family planning programme in India. Bombay: Tata Institute for Social Studies Archive.

FELD, S. and K. BASSO. 1996. Introduction. *In* S. Feld and K. Basso, eds, *Senses of place*, pp. 3–13. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

FERGUSON, J. 1999. *Expectations of modernity: Myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

FOUCAULT, M. 1981. *The history of sexuality*, Vol. 1. London: Pelican.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PUBLICATION. 2000. *National fertility and health survey 1998–1999.* Mumbai: IIPS.

JEFFREY, R. and P. JEFFREY. 1997. *Population, gender and politics: Demographic change in rural India.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

JODHA, N.S. 2001. *Life on the edge: Sustaining agriculture and community resources in fragile environments.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

JOHNSON, M. 1998. At home and abroad: Inalienable wealth, personal consumption and the formulations of femininity in the southern Philippines. *In* D. Miller, ed., *Material cultures: Why some things matter*, pp. 215–38. London: University College London Press.

Lambert, H. 2000. Sentiment and substance in north Indian forms of relatedness. *In* J. Carsten, ed., *Cultures of relatedness*, pp. 73–89. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Layne, L. 1999. *Transformative motherhood: On giving and getting in a consumer culture.* New York: New York University Press.

Mills, M.B. 1997. Contesting the margins of modernity: Women, migration and consumption in Thailand. *American ethnologist* 24, 1: 37–61.

Moore, H. 1994. Bodies on the move: Gender, power and material culture. *In* H. Moore, *A passion for difference: Essays in anthropology and gender*, pp. 71–86. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ram, K. 1998. Maternity and the story of enlightenment in the colonies: Tamil coastal women, south India. *In* K. Ram and M. Jolly, eds., *Maternities and modernities: Colonial and postcolonial experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, pp. 114–43. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Unnithan-Kumar, M. 1997. *Identity, gender and poverty: New perspectives on caste and tribe in Rajasthan.* Oxford: Berghahn Books/Jaipur: Rawat.

———. 1999. Households, kinship and access to reproductive health care among rural Muslim women in Jaipur. *Economic and political weekly* 44, 10 & 11· 621–30.

——— 2001. Emotion, agency and access to healthcare. Women's experiences of reproduction in Jaipur. *In* S. Tremayne, ed., *Managing reproductive life: Cross-cultural themes in fertility and sexuality*, pp. 27–51. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

———. 2002. Midwives among others: Knowledges of healing and the politics of emotions. *In* S. Rozario and G. Samuels, eds., *Daughters of Hariti· Birth and female healers in South and Southeast Asia*, pp. 109–29. London: Routledge.

———. 2003. Reproduction, health, rights: Connections and disconnections. *In* R. Wilson and J. Mitchell, eds., *Human rights in global perspective.* London: Routledge (in press).

Van der Veer, P., ed. 1995. *Nation and migration: The politics of space in the South Asian diaspora.* Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.

Calcutta's labour migrants: Encounters with modernity

Arjan de Haan

This article, drawing on fieldwork in Calcutta in the early 1990s, focuses on the variety of ways in which migrants' encounters with modernity have been structured and perceived. It takes 'modernity' as referring to a set of conditions relating to industrial work and living in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Rather than criticising the notion of modernity, it unpacks it and tries to show how different groups of migrants may have differentially perceived their move from countryside to city. It describes the relative continuity between rural and urban work, illustrated in a continuity of livelihood strategies straddling rural and urban areas. It then goes on to describe how the experiences of labour migrants differed according to—and were structured by—gender, generation, regional, religious and caste backgrounds and identities.

I
Introduction

In writing about labour migrants in India, and West Bengal in particular, it is impossible not to engage with the strong Marxist tradition of historiography, including the path-breaking work of the late Ranajit Das Gupta.

Arjan de Haan is at the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), British High Commission, B28, Tara Crescent, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 016, India.

Acknowledgements: Research on which this article is based was carried out during my PhD at Erasmus University, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and part funded by WOTRO. The research in Calcutta and subsequent analysis were carried out with the help of a great number of people, particularly Gautam Sanyal who assisted me in the research for one year. This article benefited from comments by participants at the Sussex workshop, particularly John Harriss, by the editors of this volume, and by an anonymous referee. All errors, of course, are mine.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

It seems justified to argue that this tradition has paid too little attention to non-material aspects of the lives of workers. A counter-view to this has been provided by the 'subaltern' strand of historiography, which has brought it somewhat closer to post-modern and cultural studies. Dipesh Chakrabarty, for instance, has produced a powerful critique of the historiography of the Bengal working class, emphasising the cultural aspects of working class history, communal divisions among workers, ties of language, religion and kinship.

The writings of Chakrabarty, however, continue to remain within the limits of a Marxist approach, at least in one respect. Like the Marxist authors he criticises, his descriptions centre on the idea of a unilinear, although retarded, development of capitalism and the working class. History is described as essentially deviating from Western European paths, for example, in so far as workers act 'out of an understanding that was prebourgeois in its elements'. As with the analysis of Parimal Ghosh, becoming a class for itself remains a central theme, and an evolution hindered, in Chakrabarty's words, by the worker remaining 'a prisoner of his precapitalist culture' (Chakrabarty 1989: 212–18).[1]

Samita Sen's study of gender relations in the late-colonial jute industry (1992, 1999) has probably marked the most important departure from these Marxist and subalternist frameworks and debates.[2] She has emphasised the gendered nature of rural and urban modes of production, including a long-term trend towards devaluation of women's labour, and the emergence of dowry practices. Her emphasis on the construction of notions of female labour, the elite discourses on femininity and an emerging notion of 'domesticity' is particularly relevant here. Along with Chakrabarty's, Sen's analysis has been one of the few attempts to describe migrant workers' encounters with the urban colonial world not only in

[1] A critique of this position was formulated by Bagchi (1990), Das Gupta (1976, 1981) and Ghosh (1999) who reassert Marxist categories (though they do not indicate how gender, culture, and language, which they admit have been neglected in Marxist analyses, ought to be incorporated). O'Hanlon and Washbrook (1992) have provided another provocative critique of the subaltern project's potentially conservative implication of denying the underclasses the ability to present themselves as classes (cf. de Haan 1999).

[2] That is, in the absence of the emergence of a lively oral history tradition, which my own study (de Haan 1994a) attempted. See also Fernandes (1997), discussed below. Few anthropological or sociological studies of labour exist, at least in West Bengal (exceptions include Bhattacharya and Chatterjee 1972).

its material aspects, but also in terms of the wider aspects of workers' experiences.[3]

In an attempt to widen the scope of the historiography in eastern India, this article focuses on the way migrant workers may have perceived their encounter with the 'modern world': being in the city, its housing conditions, the large factories, modern methods of labour recruitment, and patterns of social and managerial control and work discipline. The studies quoted above are helpful in that they have described the external forces that have no doubt had an enormous impact on the inhabitants of rural areas who moved to the city—whether forced by push factors, or attracted to the better wages and perhaps even the 'city lights' of Calcutta. However, here I attempt a more in-depth understanding of what meaning (or meanings) the move to the city may have had for migrants.

Whereas critical historiography has emphasised resistance to modernity, in the form of strikes against managerial and state control and conditions of labour, I suggest here that interaction with modernity was complex and context-specific. Despite the singular appearance of modernity (factories, living conditions, the state) it seems plausible to argue that different groups constructed different modernities. In any case, modernity always revealed itself as fragments, much in the way that artefacts of modern (western) consumption find their place in the lives of people who are only marginally exposed to this 'modern world'; they are objects of desire because of their modern nature, but at the same time they are contested, and appreciated in different ways, by, for example, different generations.

This is not to claim any significant theoretical contribution to theories of modernity.[4] As in Miller's study of mass consumption in Trinidad (1994), for example, I begin from an assumption that 'modernity has left us with as strong a tendency towards heterogeneity in culture as ever', while at the same time arguing for 'elements of commensurability' (Miller 1994: 80) which, in this article, relate predominantly to the emergence of 'modern' forms of state intervention (colonial and postcolonial) and industrial production. My approach is also consistent with Leela Fernandes' (1997) analysis of the post-1947 'politics of gender' in the jute industry, and the reproduction of gendered ideologies (gender being

[3] Parimal Ghosh (1999: 38–53) also provides a description of the way migrant workers experienced the repressive nature of the colonial state, in both urban and rural areas.

[4] My main points seem in line with the theoretical arguments put forward by Appadurai, Comaroff and Comaroff, and Gupta, as quoted in the article by Francis Watkins in this volume.

'constitutive' and 'intersectional' rather than 'unitary'); and with Mills' (1999) description of how Thai labour migrants pursue their economic goals in the context of other powerful social and cultural forces. Drawing on the writings of Giddens (1979, 1984), my study tries to emphasise the interrelations between structural forces and the purposive behaviour of agents, thus avoiding also common dichotomies like tradition versus industrialisation and urbanisation.

In the following exposition, I focus on the variety of ways in which migrants' encounters with modernity have been structured and perceived, including whether 'modernity' was a concept or term with a meaning for migrant workers. I draw on anthropological/sociological and historical research among labour migrants and their families in an industrial area. The research was carried out in the early 1990s in the industrial area of Titagarh, about 20 kilometres north of the centre of Calcutta (de Haan 1994a), which started to grow with the expansion of the jute industry (plus a paper mill) in the late 19th century. Migrants have come from poor parts of rural Bihar and other surrounding states, and have to a large extent maintained very close links with rural areas over an extended period of time. The emphasis of this article will be on three axes of experience amongst different migrant groups, to illustrate the heterogeneity of cultural articulations: gender, life-cycle and class/ethnicity.

As a historical study, this description has certain inherent limitations. As noted, oral history has remained an underdeveloped area. Apart from a few short oral testimonies in reports like the Royal Commission's in 1931, no cases of autobiographies and similar personal testimonies are known to exist. The family histories I documented, being predominantly attempts to describe material survival strategies, focus only marginally on the cultural aspects of migrants' working lives. So some of the cultural interpretations are based on reading between the lines (and the silences, as Chakrabarty emphasised) of the existing documentation. Much more research is needed before Parry's (1999) comment that the icon of culture is there on the desktop, but that its 'actual content is safely tucked out of sight', is no longer justified.

At the same time, the historical approach on which I base my argument may provide two advantages (or additions) over contemporary ethnographic approaches. First, it indicates that—in this particular case—forces of globalisation are by no means a late 20th century phenomenon. Second, it helps us to see processes of continuity as much as of change. For

example, processes of identity formation as described in Section five below are seen at a random point along a trajectory of centuries (at the end of one, at least), rather than at what may be seen as a crossroad, as suggested in studies emphasising the newness of migration. Also, the focus emphasises the migrants' *continuous* straddling of rural and urban space, and how this has significantly shaped their experiences.

I will first describe some core elements of the migrants' experiences in the city, followed by an exploration of the meanings of work. I then describe how men and women experienced the city in different ways, and explore how the gendered nature of these experiences is itself structured by regional and ethnic differences, changing over time. Experiences also differ depending on life-cycle stages described next: whereas for the younger generation the city and migration could be something of an adventure, over time, moving back to the village became increasingly important.

II
Migrants in the city

Of course, different perspectives would provide very different pictures of the city. For many a colonial writer, the industrial city epitomised a loss of the 'real' character of the Indian, seen as being essentially rural. For the colonial authorities, the city (at least the industrial part of it) was primarily a means for the extraction of wealth, and those that had to live within the industrial neighbourhood physically separated themselves from it as much as possible—a fact which did not significantly change over time. Part, perhaps a third, of industrial housing was provided by factory owners, in orderly barrack style. Over time the municipal authorities, including the locally elected, came to play a more important role, and infrastructure gradually developed. For health authorities, the industrial masses posed the threat of disease, as during outbreaks of malaria.

Given the limitations of my fieldwork (including the incapability of adequately translating half a dozen different languages/dialects in the industrial neighbourhood), describing the *experiences* of migrants when moving to this city remains a difficult subject. As indicated, the research was in Titagarh, in the northern part of greater Calcutta, among migrants who came from the states surrounding West Bengal—few Bengali labourers joined the industry—to work in the industries that had developed from the late 19th century onwards. The largest group of migrants came

from what was often referred to as 'up-country', the border area of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Migrants also came from Orissa (in Titagarh particularly, from Gurundi in Ganjam) and Andhra Pradesh, and a few from Madhya Pradesh.

From the field research, three elements, no doubt strongly influenced by my interest and research questions, stood out: (*a*) the economic nature of decisions to migrate; (*b*) the 'ease' with which migrants made the rural-urban transition; and (*c*) their continuing links with their villages. First, unskilled migrant workers moved primarily for economic reasons, to obtain work to supplement their poor income in rural areas of Bihar and elsewhere. Even the somewhat better-off migrated primarily to enhance their incomes. The question 'why' people migrated was answered with statements highlighting poverty and exploitation in the village,[5] family crises (particularly the death of breadwinners), the availability of work in the city, and also issues relating to access, such as the presence of family or relatives in the factories or industrial areas, or recruiters (*sardars*) on behalf of the companies. In migrants' responses, it was the need to obtain a livelihood that was primarily responsible for structuring the experience of the city. Within that, the relative ease of obtaining a job in the past, contrasted with the difficulties experienced since the 1970s, coloured the interviews with ideas of a better past.

Second, migrants were usually fairly well-prepared for their move. For many groups or areas, the move to Calcutta was not the first—most areas of recruitment had a pre-history of migration, including to places as far away as Burma (particularly Orissa migrants). They usually moved with others, and/or to places with established contacts—family, relatives, or people from their own village.[6] In the colonial industry, jobs were commonly passed on to sons or other relatives. Thus, in the factory for which I obtained data regarding the composition of the labour force at the beginning and the end of the 20th century (when jobs had become much harder to obtain), the concentration of workers from one particular district seemed to have increased, showing the importance of networks

[5] This indicates also that 'village' does not have the connotation of 'tradition', if this is to imply an undifferentiated and immobile rural society. Though migrants consider the village as the preferred place of living, they have experienced exploitation (and, implicitly, effects of state intervention). If anything, moving to the city was an attempt to achieve upward social and economic mobility (or to limit downward mobility).

[6] It should be stressed that despite the long distance between the villages and Calcutta, infrastructure was fairly well developed by the end of the 19th century, and all recruitment areas were well-served by railways.

in migration. Entry into the city was mediated through these networks, and the familiarity of kin and their households.

Third, many of the migrants did not fully settle in the city. Throughout the 20th century, families have maintained very close links with their villages of origin—a phenomenon which, though it does not contradict the century-long trend of urbanisation,[7] should not be seen as transitory. The migrants' (extended) family lives and livelihoods have continued to straddle urban and rural areas. Therefore, their encounter with the city needs to be seen as a continuum rather than the dichotomy that many studies on rural-urban migration suggest; despite their long periods of stay, the city remained 'foreign' (*pardeshi*), in the words of one migrant. In economic terms, labour migration towards the cities was for many migrants a way of maintaining their economic position in the village. As one migrant put it, income from industrial labour helped him to plough his land. More generally, basic consumption needs of the family/household were central to migrants' motivations for migration. Most of them clearly indicated that the village remained their home,[8] that they would prefer to live there, and to return there after retirement.

As I have described in detail elsewhere, for certain parts of Bihar out-migration seemed to have been part of the economic as well as social structure of society—reflected in folk songs and plays (e.g., Bikari Thakur's play about a woman who has formed a relationship with another man while her husband has been away). Areas like Bhojpur in western Bihar have a centuries-long tradition of migration. Migration streams to the eastern parts of Bengal (now Bangladesh) in the 18th century were followed by large numbers migrating under the system of indentured labour during the 19th century. At the end of the 19th century, migration for industrial work became the most important form of population mobility. This maintained the form of temporary migration, leading colonial and industrial authorities to complain of the lack of commitment of the migrant worker, ideas that continued to be current at the end of the 20th century. The point of the argument here is not whether this migration was good or bad—folk songs suggest that for most people there were two sides to the story (see below)—but simply that migration was a

[7] This sounds like a contradiction; the point, however, is that the secular trend of urbanisation in India since, say, the mid–19th century, has been relatively slow, involving continued interaction over perhaps two centuries, with the possibility—as during the crisis of the 1930s—of temporary reversals.

[8] In the stories of the migrants, the quality of housing figured little, which is probably related to the priority given to improving their own houses in the village

common feature of the social-cultural and economic structure of the migrants' areas of origin.

Therefore, while the encounter with the expanding city and industry was certainly new, this was not associated with an uprooting of a rural population. Nor was exposure to areas outside the village a new phenomenon. At the same time, this experience with the city could be extremely limited, and only a few experienced the city as 'universal objects of desire ...' and 'dream of the ransom of modernity' (Khilnani 1997: 109). Though the jute industry was located within the Calcutta Metropolitan area, it was still a fair distance away from the centre of the city. Contact with urban life remained fairly limited, and focused on the industrial neighbourhood or workers' houses constructed by the industry (about one-third in the jute industry), or privately. Women who moved to the city tended to live in fairly enclosed spaces, and there were cases where women who had lived in the industrial neighbourhood for years had not seen the main tourist attractions of Calcutta, a visit to Calcutta's Maidan being a novel and major event.

Thus, the city was experienced in very specific ways. First, experiences—though no doubt having a new character—continued to be as much influenced by the rural background as by living in the city. For many, the village remained home, with income earned and saved to be invested there. Second, though out-migration is part and parcel of many rural societies, contact with the world outside also remained very specific and limited. Finally, whereas Marxists have seen colonial industries in terms of exploitation, for the migrants they were a source of livelihood—not much more, but also not much less.

III
Work as modernity?

So far, I have emphasised the continuity in the transition between rural and urban areas, suggesting that urban cannot be equated with 'modern'. Apart from the fact that this term was not commonly used by migrant workers themselves, our (the observers') concepts also need to take account of diversity and fluidity. I now address the question of whether the same applies to the experience with work, that is, with the labour regime in the industries.

From oral histories, the city and industry did not appear as alien or magical/mythical.[9] In a certain sense, however, as with the city, there was 'something modern' about the jobs for migrants, partly related to the relatively good income obtained. In migrants' words, the stability and regularity of the jobs were also important—differentiating them from rural work or jobs in the 'informal sector'. Significantly, terms like 'service', and '*naukri*' were used for jobs in the industry, connoting superior types of jobs and a sense of economic improvement. Conditions of labour were of course poor, but for the worker from rural background, with very little land and/or exploitative labour relations, these probably did not look particularly harsh—even in the earlier period, before labour legislation and trade union activity improved labour conditions.

The industries being foreign-owned, experience with foreigners was fairly common. The managers of the jute industry were predominantly English (later to be replaced by Marwaris), whereas technicians and shop-floor overseers generally came from Dundee. Bengalis occupied most of the clerical positions and the *sardars* (gang leaders) came from the ranks of the workers. There is little evidence that the relationship with these foreigners was at all tense, or that the life-styles or attitudes of the foreigners had any considerable impact on the migrant workers and their families. Contact remained limited, as housing was clearly separated, and I believe few British managers could communicate effectively with their workers.[10] Employment records were known to be inaccurate, and it was generally thought that more workers were receiving wages than were actually employed.

There are a few cases which could be construed as a clash between the traditional world of the migrants and the modern world of the industry. One issue was the imposition of wearing shorts for those who worked close to machines, as *lungis* had the risk of getting caught up in the machinery. Another example regards the 'discipline' of the migrant

[9] Admittedly, oral histories give a very indirect representation of experiences. I concluded that memories tended to bias towards 'the good old days', when wages were high (which was in contrast with documented wage trends), jobs easily available, and the industrial neighbourhood a safe place.

[10] The issue of language has been little analysed. A book entitled *Essentials of colloquial Hindustani for jute mills and workshops* existed (cf. Chakrabarty 1989), and shop-floor managers did receive training, but, in the words of a manager I interviewed in Dundee, they remained largely unaware of what the *babus* told the workers.

worker. Even today, most managers believe that workers are not 'committed' to industrial life. In the early period of the industry, with some shortages of labour, high labour turnover was often associated with this lack of commitment—though the industrialists also came to realise that wage differentials between local mills encouraged workers to move from one mill to another. This became an important theme of the management literature from the 1950s onwards, in which—again—the traditional and pre-industrial tendencies of the workers were core ideas.

Chakrabarty has, I think, rightly pointed out the lack of interest on the part of the industry in training and disciplining its workforce, something which he associates with its 'mercantilist spirit' (Chakrabarty 1989: 15). But missing from this story has been the perspective of the worker. How did he or she experience the conditions of the industry, for example the lack of push to 'discipline' them? As I have argued extensively elsewhere (de Haan 1999), the *badli* labour system and its evolution need to be seen as the outcome of complex forces and interests, including workers' strategies—economic and cultural—in which rural links remained central.

Similarly absent from the historiography have been the opinions of workers at times when industries closed. For example, during the crisis of 1929–31, a large number of workers were dismissed. Employers were struck by the ease with which they got away with this, and how workers disappeared (i.e. returned to their villages) as 'snow for the sun', as Labour Commissioner Gilchrist (1932) put it. During my field research, I desperately tried to fill the gap in information about the fate of workers, to find only that this crisis was absent in the workers' histories. This led me to question whether, in the workers' view, this 'crisis' was so significant, and particularly whether fluctuations in the availability of work were very striking for workers whose rural background entailed much stronger seasonal fluctuations, and who were accustomed to return to villages regularly.

Thus, there was indeed 'something modern' about work in the industries. Workers perceived this as an entry into a new world, of better paid and more regular jobs, superior to other forms of work. But I would suggest, in line with the argument in the preceding section, and similar to what Pinney (1999) has described for factory workers in Nagda in Madhya Pradesh, that 'modern' was mainly a 'better livelihood', that the cultural influences remained limited, and that migrants were able to fit this new reality into existing patterns of living, customs and livelihood sources in rural areas.

So far I have stressed the permeability of rural and urban areas, of tradition and modernity, closely interwoven in the minds and livelihoods of migrants. But these 'intersections' were not the same for all, and the remainder of this article will describe the varied experiences of different groups, by gender, age, and diverse cultural identities.

IV
Gendered experiences of city and industry

As indicated already, women and men tended to have different experiences of the city, since for women space was usually much more restricted, to the home and immediate surroundings of the particular neighbourhood. Gender is perhaps one of the most important axes along which encounters with modernity differed, and continue to differ.

It is a matter of debate how much industrialisation and urbanisation influenced gender relations. However, analysis of historical trends and geographical differences allows us to avoid the traditional-modern dichotomy (Sen 1999). In the early stages of the jute industry, a fairly large number of women joined the industry (de Haan 1994b). But there were geographical differences: comparatively more women from Andhra Pradesh and southern Orissa than from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh worked in the industry. It is not entirely clear whether this pattern was as strongly manifest from the start of the industry in the late 19th century, but it certainly developed fairly early on. It has been my conclusion that these *differences* were not determined by patterns of recruitment within the industry—though the level of female employment, and particularly its decline from the 1930s onwards were no doubt influenced by employers' strategies, often reinforced by (male-dominated) trade unions.

Such regional differences suggest that gender relations in rural areas need to be taken into account to understand the ways in which the move to the cities was perceived. For the many women who stayed behind in rural areas, the city remained alien. Their experience was limited to the stories told by the men and by the few women who did move and return, and to short visits. A reflection of such stories is found in folk songs, which refer both to the positive—in the form of gold that was to be found in Bengal—and to the negative—in the form of the concubine that many men were thought to have in the city. Consumption patterns in the village probably changed very little—though new consumer goods no doubt started to come in. Most important, perhaps, were changes in

household responsibilities, and the often increasing burden—but devaluation—of the work that fell on them (Sen 1999). Modernity was thus as much about a *retreat* into rural areas and a sharpening of divisions of labour (and probably of power), as it was an opening up of new patterns of living, production and consumption.

Among women who did move and take up jobs in the cities, there were those who moved alone and those who came with families. As indicated, there was and still is a general perception, in the colonial reports as well as in the migrants' stories (particularly in northern India), that only the most downtrodden women, including widows and divorcees, would work in factories.[11] For them, moving to cities was one of the few survival strategies left, and may have implied a partial escape from repressive patriarchal relations in the village. For others, this tended to be associated—as the city was generally—with a loss of morality, and descent into promiscuity. Prostitution is thought to have been widespread, and an important livelihood source for single women in the urban areas—but often associated with women from 'other' groups, e.g., Bengalis, according to migrants from UP. But often women would enter into new marriages within the industrial neighbourhood.

On the other hand, women from Andhra Pradesh ('Telugus') and south Orissa tended to move with entire families. Women as well as men took up jobs in the industries, or the small-scale trading and other activities that developed around the factories. The women who started work in the industries found themselves in a strongly segmented labour market and workplace. For reasons not quite clear, women were concentrated mostly in two departments of the jute industry: spinning and batching. Women also remained excluded from the slight prospects for career improvement that did exist, like becoming a *sardar* (labour recruiter, foreman, gang leader) or leading local trade unions. Over time, opportunities for work for women have declined, more rapidly than for men. Because of the nature of my fieldwork, I have little information about the effect of working and earning on relations within the household, but casual observation suggests that it did at least make a difference in the way women experienced the city.

Finally, despite being a predominantly male neighbourhood, women did move with men (in fact, over the last sixty years or so the sex ratio in

[11] Women—particularly the poor, widows, etc.—have continued to be illegally employed, through a system known as *bhaga*, in which a permanent worker subcontracts tasks to women working for a low wage.

Titagarh has equalised), worked in the home, and took most of the responsibility for family and household. I noted above that in some particular cases, women's encounter with the city was extremely partial, and that many may not have left the industrial area on any regular basis—their experience of modernity being almost entirely restricted to the village, the small urban area in which they lived, and the one-day or so travel between. Within the urban area, many women lived in a new form of *purdah*, confined to small houses, and sometimes to an area between a group of one-room houses. Leaving this area was often restricted to festivities such as religious festivals. And, while men would not hesitate using public bathing facilities at any time during the day, women would do so only before sunrise.

Thus, experiences of the modernity of city and industry were strongly gendered. Contrary to recent trends, particularly in export-oriented industries, the dominant tendency in the old colonial industries was towards low and often declining female labour force participation. Women's experiences therefore tended to be restricted to staying behind in villages, and, if they moved to urban areas, their experiences were often confined to the domestic sphere (with some modern conveniences but also possibly increased restrictions on mobility), or to restricted physical areas and opportunities within the industries. The political economy of the industry itself was strongly gendered, as manifested in the segmentation of the labour market and in managers' perceptions regarding female labour; but a culturally differentiated understanding of the gendered experience of city and industry, the intersections with both class and regional differences, and how these have changed over time, are equally important.

V
Generational differences

At present, the industry employs only adult labour—and because of the lack of labour turnover, the average age is very high. This has been the main result of labour legislation, of which different acts have been introduced since the late 19th century: child labour was very common until the mid-1920s but rapidly declined over the subsequent decade.[12] Increasingly, factory labour has become associated with ideas around a male

[12] Also, in the early years of the industry, it was commonplace for women to bring their young children with them into the factory, a practice which was subsequently banned.

breadwinner. But how have different age groups experienced entry into the city and its labour market? And how has this changed over time?

In areas with long histories of migration, like many parts of Bihar, migration and employment outside the village form a kind of *rite de passage*—part of the life-cycle of many village families. The decision to migrate is not a very difficult or uncommon one. Men are expected to provide for their families; livelihood opportunities in the village are scarce; and networks exist through which young men can obtain shelter and jobs elsewhere. As described above, migrants portrayed this move as a temporary one, usually with the objective of retiring to the village, hopefully with some savings.

But entry into the city was not always as straightforward as this suggests. In my research into employment patterns of migrant workers and families, I was often struck by a point of discontinuity. I had expected the boys of families from poor rural areas to take up jobs as soon as possible, but there were numerous cases in which young men started working quite late, and many youngsters were not desperately looking for work. Masuddin, born in Chapra, told us that he had done 'nothing' during his youth in the village. He was a wrestler, and went to various places like Benares and Ghazipur, till his father called him when he was in his early twenties and he took a job as a weaver in the Kelvin jute mill. In many cases—though less so recently—boys could get a jute mill job before they were 18 years old; even then, they did not start work immediately after outgrowing childhood or leaving school. There is a relatively long period where young men have the possibility of *ghumna* (to move around without supervision), to try out jobs here and there.[13]

Boys spent quite a long time without being economically productive, and this seemed to be socially accepted. In answer to my query about why so many boys travelled around, a shopkeeper answered that life before marriage is different, that young men are able to go to different places, that they have to settle down only once they get married. (He had also done various jobs in various places, but had to settle down because of family responsibilities.) Despite a strong ethos about work and family responsibilities, young men's encounter with life outside their village of birth does have an element of adventure, and a temporary escape from

[13] This could be construed as an early form of 'tourism', as described by Mills (1999) for Thai labour migrants. In any case these personal histories of Indian labour migrants, as well as the early colonial records regarding the rapid turnover and 'lack of discipline' of the migrant workers (see de Haan 1994), suggest that struggles over leisure and control of (working) time existed in these early periods of industrialisation.

the otherwise strict social control and the narrow living space of the home village and industrial area. For young women, no such option usually exists: their experience was confined to the boundaries of the household, and women migrating on their own usually had to establish some form of conjugal relationship for their own security.

The increase in education—evident among the group I interviewed—is significantly changing this experience. About half of the older generation of workers interviewed had not been to school at all before taking up work. They often said this was as much because of a lack of interest as through economic necessity—in fact, in the story of many older workers, there was a general sense that life was much easier in the past (though wage and price trends do not always confirm this). During the late 20th century, schooling among the children of migrant workers has expanded: the industrial area is marked by large schools (in various languages), along with a number of teachers who also provide private tuition. Education is greatly valued, and many workers hope that their sons will not end up working in the industry.

This trend does not necessarily mean that boys cannot wander around any more, but it has changed the way migrant workers in this area now experience urban and industrial life, and differences in experiences between younger and older generations. Aspirations of children and their parents have increased, and this has put an increasing pressure on children: to perform well at school, and to attend private tuition (if the family can afford this). It has brought a new element into life in the industrial area. For the youngsters the element of adventure and newness of the move to the city and job has disappeared, and a new but probably much more competitive world—with the possibility of frustrated expectations—has opened up. Arguably, it is also a world of increased disciplining throughout childhood and adolescence.

Another aspect of how experiences of the city have changed over generations relates to life-styles. There has been little study into the material artefacts that migration to urban areas may have introduced into the lives of rural dwellers, and my own field notes contain only sketchy information. No doubt presents brought back home have long been an important aspect of the migrants' social life, perhaps more so in the early stages of migration, but still relevant now. Urban areas are generally seen as providing easier living, including the presence of electricity, water supply, markets—though on the other hand, the village is appréciated for its lack of congestion and more relaxed living styles. But this experience is not only ambivalent; it is also different for different age groups. The

older generation—usually stressing the quietness and safety of the past, how they could leave their doors unlocked and sleep outside—often commented disapprovingly on the consumption patterns of young men, in particular their 'film star' style of dressing (marked at the time of my fieldwork by wide pants and oversized shirts). Thus, for the older generation the younger one tended to be much more modern, and this was certainly not a straightforwardly positive move for them.

Finally, where the experience of youngsters is to some extent determined by a desire to move out of the village and visit various places before settling down for work, it seems that people's orientations over the life-cycle are increasingly motivated by a desire to move back. Most workers expressed a strong desire to return after retirement to the village, seen as a place of relaxation despite the absence of modern conveniences. (Many retired workers in fact had stayed in the industrial neighbourhood because their pensions had not been paid.)

Thus, besides a gendered perspective, a life-cycle one seems a useful way to understand the varied encounters with modernity. The younger generation, at least the boys, seems to have a stronger desire to move into modern urban life, an experience which has changed during the last century under the influence of changing work patterns and the expansion of education. Adult men are increasingly restricted to industrial life because of family responsibilities. Meanwhile a wish to move back into the 'traditional' life of the village determines the experience of the older generation.

VI
Regional identities

The experience of migrants is structured primarily by job opportunities and by the class positions they move into—in this case primarily those of unskilled industrial labourers, though with some socio-economic mobility and increasing education levels. Linked to this is the experience of the working conditions in dark dusty factories, as well as the cramped living conditions—for the majority of workers in private housing, and for a smaller group in the barrack-style housing provided by the factories.

Both working and living conditions have, throughout the history of the jute industry, been segmented. Specific groups of migrants were concentrated in specific departments, as indicated for female employment, and in specific areas of the town. Some of the historiography has argued

that such divisions were a creation of the industry, partly to prevent workers from organising themselves. Indeed, employers—both the British and Indian owners, as well as the Bengali *babus*—commonly used stereotypes when referring to particular groups. However, there is little indication that these divisions were orchestrated by employers, and it is imperative to take into account the varied and overlapping identities—religious, caste, regional—that structured the workers' encounter with the modern world.

In the first place, Titagarh is a peculiar non-Bengali enclave within the heart of Bengal. Manual Bengali labour disappeared from the industry early on, and it was often said to be below Bengali status to work in jute mills and live among Bihari workers. From the start, however, Bengalis were hired to carry out administrative tasks, and hence formed an important—though not necessarily very effective—intermediary between the English-speaking management and the mostly Bihari ('Hindustani') labour. Today, stereotypes from the side of the Bengalis are matched by stereotypes about Bengalis among the migrants (for example, regarding their refined culture, predisposition to excessive talking).

The majority of migrants have come from up-country, the border districts of Bihar and UP, sometimes designated as Bhojpur (in the case of the jute mill I studied in detail, many have come from the district of Saran). The stereotypical picture of the Bihari is that of the unskilled manual labourer, a single male migrant who has left his family behind to take care of his generally small property. His property at home is very important to him, and he exaggerates the amount of land he owns. Although many women migrated in the past, they are generally not 'brought' by migrants from north India (including north Orissa).

The areas where Biharis live are distinguishable from those of Oriyas and 'Madrasis'. Within the southern communities, women are present on the street, houses show signs of a more complete family life, and there are more schools, clubs and temples. The Bihari area is less lively, and marriage ceremonies held less often. Hindu migrants celebrate Holi like the Bengalis, but one day later. Durga Puja is the main festival, but Biharis also celebrate Chhat Pujah (an interesting example of a ceremony that used to be celebrated by both Hindus and Muslims) in October/November. Biharis largely share the same language. However, they do not form a single community; rather, the narrowly specific area from which they originate often determines where they come to live and work.

The second largest group is formed by 'Madrasis' (i.e., from the colonial Madras Presidency), Telugu-speaking migrants from Andhra Pradesh.

Many of them live in mill houses, more often than do the Biharis. They are clearly differentiated from Biharis in language, physique and diet. Generally, they do not own land in the village and they belong to lower castes. The socio-cultural organisation of this group, particularly regarding family organisation and female labour, shows how important regional background is for the encounter with modern industrial life. 'Madrasis' have come with whole families, although links with the village have not been broken. The neighbourhood of this group of people, therefore, looks different: there are more complete families, and women observe *purdah* less. Also, dowry is uncommon among migrants from the south, though increasingly the practice of brideprice seems to be giving way to dowry. While Bihari women often did not work in the mills and did not migrate to the city, Madrasi women did.

The following describes a series of strikes during the 1930s (as recorded in government and managers' reports), in which many Madrasis finally left one of the jute mills. This illustrates the importance of regional background in everyday experience and how this interplays with political, economic and gender relationships.

> After a strike in March in 1930, it was noted that Madrasis appeared later than the rest of the workers. Managers argued that Madrasi head *sardars* were paid by agitators—a common complaint, often used to dismiss grievances. Reasons for discontent were the introduction of high-speed machinery in the spinning department (in which many Madrasis worked), dismissal of workers, and wages. In 1937 unrest still prevailed around the same issues, but it was stronger among spinners, both Hindustanis (as both managers' reports and Madrasis tended to call north Indian workers) and Madrasis. In 1938, again there were demands for an increase in wages and for subsistence allowance among spinners. Madrasi women started a strike and finally 'undesirables' and Madrasi labour were dismissed, and had to leave the coolie lines. From interviews with the older workers, or from records, the reason why Madrasis continued their strike were not clear, but it is plain that there was strong antagonism between Hindustanis and Madrasis: when the former wanted to continue working, the latter did not. Thus, though the two groups had the same interests in an economic or class sense, unity seemed to have broken on the basis of community.

Third, a small group of people inhabiting an 'Oriya line' again emphasises the importance of rural background for social organisation in the town.

Geographically, the area from which they come is similar to that of the Madrasis (the border of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, which used to be part of the Parlakhemundi kingdom), but they are clearly distinguishable—ethnically, linguistically and in terms of caste. These workers come from a small area within the district of Ganjam, mainly from one village and its surroundings, and they had a prior history of migration to Burma, returning (by foot) when the Japanese bombing started. Many of them worked in one mill, and mostly in two departments of this mill, carrying out the least skilled work. Their line was the most developed among the areas I visited—though the link with the village has by no means been severed. The migrants have really settled down, much more than the Biharis, showing signs of complete family life. Houses have been improved, fairly large Harinam and Sitala temples built, and they have their own clubs, high school, and an Oriya library.

Thus, it is clear how important regional background has been for the way migrants entered and experienced the city and the mills. These ties were much more than a mere buffer against an unmediated clash with the modern world; they actively structured and mediated these experiences, being hence as much 'traditional' as they are 'modern'. A reflection on how stereotypes operate and are applied may help to illustrate the dynamism behind the identities. The use of stereotypes was very widespread. Terms like 'Madrasis' and 'Hindustanis' were used in employers' and government labour records, as well as by workers themselves. These descriptions were usually not very 'accurate' and could even lead to confusion (as after the murder of Rajiv Gandhi by Tamil extremists, when police feared reprisals against 'Madrasis')—but the important point is that people identified both themselves and others in such terms. The history of such stereotypes still needs to be studied, for example the extent to which colonial reports were responsible for creating them, and whether these were subsequently internalised by migrants; but in any case, after 100 years of settlement they still exist and continue to inform the way migrants in a complex town like Titagarh identify themselves.

I have argued here that identities are not merely the result of employers' strategies, but need to be seen in a dynamic context, including how they help provide access to jobs and housing in the city, and structure family life and habits. Though identities change over time, they do not disappear, and can be reinforced. Examples of merging—for example the increasing practice of dowry among southern migrants—are signs of the dynamism, not the disappearance, of these identities. In many cases they are strengthened through increasing segmentation of labour markets (when jobs are

scarce), and the self-reinforcing effect of the networks of relatives, acquaintances, and *sardars* that mediate entry into the labour market. Similar issues relate to religious identity, as described below.

VII
Religious identities

Apart from regional and ethnic backgrounds, religious differences have exerted a considerable influence on urban experiences. Hindus probably formed the majority in the town, and this proportion may well have increased over time (though there are no records of large-scale out-migration by Muslims, for example during periods of riots). However, Muslims from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh form a very significant group, the Muslims being clearly recognisable from the Hindus, for example, in their way of dressing or in having a beard or moustache. Language also differs, Hindus speaking Hindi and Muslims Urdu.[14] There are separate schools for Hindus and Muslims, just as the different regional groups have their own schools.

In most areas, Muslims and Hindus live together, but there is also a ward near the railway inhabited almost entirely by Muslims. There are separate Muslim *gulis* (alleys) within predominantly Hindu areas. There are moves towards physical integration as well as separation. For instance, many people live in mixed areas, but particularly during communal incidents, when people feel threatened, they tend to leave and move to areas where co-religionists predominate. Since the 1950s, the situation in the industrial area has been relatively peaceful, and most people, both Hindus and Muslims, make a point of stressing that relations have been good in this area. The communal problems in December 1992 after the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya temporarily changed this. Language turned communal, workers' support for fundamentalism seemed to increase, and a huge *mandir* was erected in no time. But this did not change the predominant picture of simultaneous integration combined with the maintenance of separate religious identities.[15]

[14] Because of my lack of knowledge, these differences have not been studied in detail, and further study could shed light on change over time, for example, whether Hindi has become more sanskritised, and the role popular cinema has played in this.

[15] A trivial—for life in the industrial area—expression of identity, was how I was questioned by Muslim workers about the Western attack on a small Muslim country (i.e., the bombing of Iraq during 1991).

The division of labour in the factories shows similar patterns of mixing and segregation. All groups came to work in the factories, and all work in the same departments, but the weaving department was dominated by Muslims,[16] while the spinning department was dominated by Hindus from Andhra, and the least-skilled departments by Hindus from Orissa. Particularly in the case of the Muslims, their concentration in the weaving department was explained—by employers and workers alike—as being a result of their traditional occupation, that weaving is their *jatir kaj*, that Muslims know how to weave and Hindus do not. Indeed, some of the migrants interviewed had been working as weavers in their villages, but in most cases weaving was learned only after the migrants arrived, and personal networks were mainly responsible for the concentration of this group in this particular department.

> Samiuallah, a Muslim, said that his *jatir kaj* was weaver. Yet his grandfather had been a boatman who had come to live with the people from his village who had come to Titagarh earlier. His father started working as a weaver in Standard Jute Mill. Samiullah also learnt weaving, in another mill, but took up *biri* work instead.

The case of the concentration of people (Hindus) from Andhra in the spinning department is equally striking; many actually did know the art of weaving, but since access to that department was dominated by other groups, they tended to enter the spinning department.[17]

These are of course just some examples of the way in which religion, like regional identity, has influenced the city's 'modern' life, its patterns of living and the structure of the labour market. Perhaps the most significant observation is that segmentation has not necessarily weakened over time, and in some cases has even been strengthened. Understanding these patterns of segmentation requires much more analysis and research, but the point to be made here is that these religious differences are not in contradiction—though sometimes in conflict—with the existence of

[16] In 1902, 33 per cent of the weavers in Titaghur Jute Mill came from Saran (13 per cent of all workers were from Saran), and in 1991 this percentage had increased to 74 per cent of the weavers (de Haan 1994a).

[17] People from Srikakolam in Andhra formed 5 per cent of the workers in spinning, and 45 per cent of the workers from Srikakolam worked in spinning (ibid.). The Oriyas concentrated in the batching department, and the explanation given for this was that they were accustomed to hard work.

a 'modern' urban working class. A similar argument applies for the category of 'caste', to which I now turn.

VIII
Caste: The antithesis of modernity?

Caste is an element of the many different ways in which migrants' urban experiences are structured. For lower castes, taking up a factory job was in general seen as upward mobility, whereas others would only work in specific, higher status occupations. An additional element of identity is also often associated with specific occupations (*jatir kaj*), not as traditional occupation, but rather as a form of newly acquired status among particular groups.

The general observation of historians is that all castes came to the area and all castes worked in the jute industry. Whatever the role of caste in the village, there is of course a large amount of work not related to caste in the industrial area. As far as I observed, there were few or no organisations based on caste—though caste divisions and hierarchy could be observed within, for example, trade union organisations. Some people said that their status as Brahmans here is of less importance than in their native village. But even though migrants stated that caste is less significant, the status of belonging to a certain caste is still important. Again, entrance to the city is mainly through personal networks in which caste plays a role, there is some degree of residential concentration, and marriage of course is very often caste-endogamous.

The role that caste plays in urban space and in labour markets is illustrated in the way that higher castes, like traders assert their caste identity when they are successful. Within the factory, *durwans* tend to be Rajputs, or at least people claiming that they come from such backgrounds, while migrants from Andhra claimed to be from the weaver caste, even though they ended up working in the spinning department:

> Linga Raju, of a weaver caste, came to Titagarh after his village in Srikakolam had been flooded, and his family—who had a weaving business—had tried their luck for some time in another village. He joined when he was 16 years old, in the spinning department (*nali khula*). He said that he could not get a job in the weaving department, since he was only 16 years old; and later he did not try other work any more: he learnt to handle the spinning machines and became a *sardar*; this work was good for him.

In the case of migrants from southern Orissa, their homogeneity and concentration—in the sense of accommodation and workplace—were enhanced by the fact that they came from the same caste, Khandait. Migrants commonly provided various examples of how segmentation operates, relating to work experience and abilities, but also to recruitment patterns (by employers, and influenced by their co-workers):

> Surender is from Cuttack district and is a *bara sardar* in the beaming department of Khardah jute mill. He stated that he supervises mainly Oriya people, including people from south Orissa (migration from north Orissa had decreased, but there were still many people from Cuttack and Baleswar in the beaming department). This was, he said, for two reasons: because it is hard work and some skill is required, and because of an 'own people's mentality'.

A small group of migrants from Madhya Pradesh were identified by others as tribals, for example, through remarks about their meat-eating habits (though these were denied by the people themselves). Finally, while overall there seemed to be little caste segregation in urban areas, and different castes could be found within one department of the mills, there was also an area of quarters built by the municipality for sweepers, generally known as the Scheduled Castes area, where there is a club named after Ambedkar.

Clearly, caste still has a meaning for urban inhabitants and the working class, though in some cases it has been weakened as a force structuring identities, and in other cases it has been strengthened.[18] There is no indication that over the last 100 years, caste has become less important in the experience of migrants, and this is not merely because marriage patterns have remained caste-bound. But at the same time, it is a very dynamic and complex category. In fact, many people referred to regional and religious identities as 'caste'; in any case, caste cannot be seen in isolation from other forms of identity, which are often overlapping.[19]

More research is needed for a better understanding of how caste has mediated migrants' experiences in the city. For example, occupational

[18] The strengthening of caste, through political rivalries and the jobber (*sardar*) system, has been emphasised by Chandavarkar (1989: 266–67, 1994) in his analysis of the Bombay working class.

[19] Discussions about the meaning of caste were often very confusing because caste titles can have different meanings in different parts of the country, and because people may well have adopted different names when moving to the city.

mobility clearly existed, not only because of changes in employment patterns, but also because of changes like those described in the case of Samiullah quoted above. Upward mobility by migrants and their families did happen, but it was uncommon. (Among the family histories I collected—not a representative sample—about one-quarter evidenced upward mobility.) The causes of segmentation were often unclear, and sometimes appeared contradictory, but this does not negate the fundamental importance caste has had as one of various overlapping identities structuring the experiences of migrants.

IX
Conclusion

The main point of this article has been to illustrate migrant workers' various encounters with modernity. I have not attempted a critique of the notion of modernity; my field research did, I think, show that city and industry represented 'something modern' for migrants from rural areas. Rather, I have tried to unpack the notion, and to show how different groups of migrants may have experienced their move to the city in different ways, and how their encounter with modernity has been structured by their various identities.

I have departed from a Marxist narrative that is influential in debates in West Bengal in two regards. First, I maintain that colonial and postcolonial industries did not introduce one modernity, but rather a series of modernities. A closer look at the management of the colonial industry, for example, would show diversity and differentiation (e.g., between middle-class English management, replaced by a Marwari elite, also alien to Bengal; the lower-class British technicians, often from Dundee; Bengali intermediaries; and the predominantly non-Bengali working class). Though 1950s management literature, as much as the Marxist literature, emphasised the traditional character of labour management practices, 'modern management' was probably more an ideological construction than a project undertaken by the colonial industrialists and authorities. My impression from the government and employers' records I studied is that employers were as often confused by 'native' forms of social organisation as actively using and exploiting them.

Second, I have described the encounters with modernity in the form of varied groups' experiences: of women, youngsters and elderly, and often different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Of course, these

identities are not exclusive, and the encounters with modernity need to be conceptualised in terms of overlapping forms of identity, sometimes mutually reinforcing, but possible also conflictual. For example, while different stages of the life-cycle structure encounters with urban modernity, this is at the same time gendered, as women's migration to cities is much more closely linked to marriage patterns, child care, and the reduced restrictions on mobility for elderly women.

However, I do not want to emphasise a narrative of resistance to modernity. There is of course a long-standing debate about the nature of working-class protest and organisation in this industry; authors like Nirban Basu (1999), Subho Basu (1998), Amal Das (1999) and Parimal Ghosh (1999) stress the radical nature of the working class, and this could no doubt be extended to the issue of resistance to modernity. Signs of such resistance do exist: male workers refusing to wear shorts instead of *lungis*; perhaps the regular changes of job that seemed characteristic of the early period of the industry; the continuous defiance of proper labour registration; or the large number of 'ghost workers' that Bengali *babus* entered into the employment records. But overall, fusion or intersection would, I believe, be more adequate descriptions than confrontation. The encounter with modernity was always ambivalent, changing, heterogeneous, and adaptive.

Thus, as in Mills' study (1999) of the interaction between economic, social and cultural forces with respect to Thai migrant labour, the experience of the working class in urban Bengal has been heavily influenced by issues relating to 'traditions' of religion, caste and regional background. Contradicting a first impression of homogeneity, Titagarh is a conglomerate of different regional backgrounds and languages, diets, caste structures, patterns of settlement, and patterns of labour market participation (particularly by women). A worker has a number of overlapping identities, of which regional background is one of the most important ones, along with religion and caste. There are few signs that these have become less important—neither the latent religious tensions nor the much more positive experiences that structure migrants' experiences in the city. In many ways, the circumstances of modernity create the very conditions for articulation of these identities. Particular regional identitites have come to be expressed, perhaps, only in the situation of the apparent urban melting pot; in some cases the city even provided people the opportunity to take up what are labelled as traditional caste occupations. Identities change over time. Sometimes elements may even converge (as in the case of the spread of dowry), but for both the observer

as well as for the people observed, identities continue to exist, not as opposed to the (modern) existence of industrial life, but as core elements of that existence.

REFERENCES

BAGCHI, A. 1990. Working class consciousness: Review of '*Rethinking working class history*' by D. Chakrabarty. *Economic and political weekly* 35, 30: PE54–PE60.

BASU, N. 1999. Outside leadership, political rivalries and labour mobilisation—The jute belt of Bengal 1919–1939. *In* A. de Haan and S. Sen, eds., *A case for labour history—The jute industry in eastern India*, pp. 114–43. Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi.

BASU, S. 1998. Strikes and 'communal' riots in Calcutta in the 1890s: Industrial workers, bhadralok nationalist leadership and the colonial state. *Modern Asian studies* 32, 4: 949–83.

BHATTACHARYA, N. and A.K. CHATTERJEE. 1972. *Some characteristic of jute industry workers in greater Calcutta*. Calcutta: Indian Statistical Institute, Research and Training School, Technical Report No. 9.

CHAKRABARTY, D. 1989. *Rethinking working-class history: Bengal 1890–1940*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

CHANDAVARKAR, R. 1989. Workers' politics and the mill districts in Bombay between the wars. *In* H. Alavi and J. Harriss, eds., *Sociology of 'developing societies': South Asia*, pp. 260–67. Hampshire/London: MacMillan.

———. 1994. *The origins of industrial capitalism in India: Business strategies and the working classes in Bombay*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DAS, A. 1999. Outside intervention in jute mill strikes—Howrah, 1870–1930. *In* A. de Haan and S. Sen, eds., *A case for labour history—The jute industry in eastern India*, pp. 82–113. Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi.

DAS GUPTA, R. 1976. Factory labour in eastern India: Sources of supply, 1855–1946. Some preliminary findings. *Indian economic and social history review* 13, 3: 277–329.

———. 1981. Structure of the labour market in colonial India. *Economic and political weekly* 16, 44–46: 1781–1806.

DE HAAN, A. 1994a. *Unsettled settlers: Migrant workers and industrial capitalism in Calcutta*. Hilversum: Verloren.

———. 1994b. Towards a single male earner: Decline of child and female employment in an Indian industry. *Economic and social history in the Netherlands* 6: 145–67.

———. 1999. The *badli* system in industrial labour recruitment: Managers' and workers' strategies in Calcutta's jute industry. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 33, 1&2: 271–301.

FERNANDES, L. 1997. *Producing workers: The politics of gender, class and culture in the Calcutta jute mills*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

GHOSH, P. 1999. An approach to the history of Indian labour. *In* A. de Haan and S. Sen, eds., *A case for labour history—The jute industry in eastern India*, pp. 38–53. Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi.

GIDDENS, A. 1979. *Central problems in social theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis*. London: MacMillan.

Giddens, A. 1984. *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gilchrist, R.N. 1932. *Indian labour and the land.* Calcutta: West Bengal Government Press.

Khilnani, S. 1997. *The idea of India.* London: Hamish Hamilton.

Miller, D. 1994. *Modernity: An ethnographic approach. Dualism and mass consumption in Trinidad.* Oxford: Berg.

Mills, M.B. 1999. Migrant labour takes a holiday: Reworking modernity and marginality in contemporary Thailand. *Critique of anthropology* 19, 1: 31–51.

O'Hanlon, R. and D Washbrook 1992. After orientalism: Culture, criticism and politics in the Third World. *Comparative studies in society and history* 34, 1: 141–67.

Parry, J.P. 1999. Introduction. *In* J.P. Parry, J. Breman and K. Kapadia, eds., *The worlds of Indian industrial labour*, pp. ix–xxxvi. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Pinney, C 1999. On living in the *kal(i)yug:* Notes from Nagda, Madhya Pradesh. *In* J.P. Parry, J. Breman and K. Kapadia, eds., *The worlds of Indian industrial labour*, pp 77–106. New Delhi. Sage Publications.

Sen, S. 1992. Women workers in the Bengal jute industry, 1890–1940: Migration, motherhood and militancy. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge.

———. 1999. *Women and labour in late colonial India.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Also from Sage

Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism in South and Southeast Asia

Causes, Dynamics, Solutions

Edited by
Rajat Ganguly & Ian Macduff

The volume by Ganguly and Macduff brings to the fore, issues in the post-colonial era that continue to hound South and Southeast Asia today: ethnic conflict and secessionism. The essays seek to identify the cause and effect relationship between ethno-nationalist sentiments and the outbreak of secessionist insurgency movements, and also the state-society and civil-military aspects behind the imbroglios in the six countries that they scan. They closely examine the dynamics between ethnic groups, between ethnic groups and the state, and explore possible solutions.

The virtual social and political storms by such ethnic groups have been detrimental to themselves as well as to the civilians. The contributions emphasize the fact that any *reductionist* approach towards the problems in the hope of respite, will not yield desired results. The issues are too volatile and need great subtlety.

The essays focus on the political, social and economic corollaries of the ethnic conflicts in South and Southeast Asia that have triggered situations beyond control. The volume is an extrospection of the 'flaws and contradictions in the post-colonial nation building' in the region. It is an engaging compendium of problems and solutions in the socio-political milieu of the concerned countries in the present day.

Bringing together the perspectives of many well-known scholars, this book will be invaluable for students and academics in the fields of ethnopolitics, ethnic conflict management, peace studies, political science, international studies and development studies.

CONTENTS: *Foreword:* Stephanie Lawson/Introduction *by* Rajat Ganguly/ 1. Secessionist Ethnic Conflict in South and Southeast Asia: A Comparative Perspective *by* David Carment/2. An Area of Darkness, Still? The Political Evolution of Ethnic Identities in Jammu and Kashmir, 1947–2001 *by* Vernon Hewitt/ 3. Ethnic Conflict in Sindh and its Impact on Pakistan *by* Teesta Ghosh/4. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam Insurgency in Sri Lanka *by* Peter Chalk/ 5. Indonesia's East Timor Experience *by* Mark Rolls/6. Ethno-communal Conflict in the Philippines: The Case of Mindanao-Sulu Region *by* Syed Serajul Islam/ 7. Ethnosecession in Papua New Guinea: The Bougainville Case *by* Roderick Alley/*Conclusion/About the Contributors/Index*

2003 ■ 292 pp ■ 220 × 140 mm ■ Hb

SAGE Publications
New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

Nehru's dream and the village 'waiting room': Long-distance labour migrants to a central Indian steel town

Jonathan P. Parry

This article focuses on long-distance rural migrants to the steel town of Bhilai. The Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP) was built with Soviet aid and by largely migrant labour drawn from all over India. It was one of a handful of mega-projects intended to kick-start India's modernisation, epitomising the Nehruvian dream. The central question addressed here concerns the extent to which its workforce have become permanent urban dwellers or form part of a pattern of rotating migration. The argument is that different patterns of migration are characteristic of workers in public and private sector factories, and at different levels of the industrial hierarchy. The aristocracy of labour are most likely to become fully-fledged townsmen. Surprisingly, this pattern is not significantly inflected by regional origin. The supposedly visceral commitment of migrants from Bhojpur to their villages does not make them more likely to return there. There are pragmatic reasons why not, but the article suggests that this is also a consequence of the extent to which the BSP workforce has internalised a vision of modernity which antithetically constructs the village as an area of darkness—a 'waiting room' from which one hopes to escape.

Jonathan P. Parry is at the Department of Anthropology, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK.

Acknowledgements: The ethnographic data discussed in this article were collected over a period of approximately nineteen months' field research, undertaken at various intervals between September 1993 and September 2001. I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Nuffield Foundation, the Economic and Social Research Council and the London School of Economics. Special thanks are due to T.G. Ajay for invaluable research assistance, and to André Béteille and Geert De Neve for comments on an earlier draft. Helpful feedback was also provided at the Sussex workshop on 'Migration and Modernities', and at seminars held in the Economic History and Anthropology Departments of the LSE.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

I
Preamble

The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future
Marx, Preface to the German edition of *Capital* (1867)

With this warning to his German readers against any complacency about England's sufferings, Marx succinctly encapsulates a teleology which, if now seemingly superseded, is hard to entirely transcend. The implication once unblushingly drawn from it was that the African (for which read Indian or Indonesian) Industrial Revolution would lead these late-starters along a trail already blazed by the West. Notwithstanding their different starting points, urban-industrial societies inexorably tend to converge on the same design. '... an African miner', as Gluckman (1961) famously claimed, 'is a miner' who 'possibly resembles miners everywhere'. With the move from field to factory, peasants become proletarians.

The plausibility of this picture for the world of Indian industrial labour has begun to look fragile. A pattern of circulatory migration from the Bhojpur region to the Bengal jute mills has persisted for more than a century and is, therefore, dubiously described as a transitional phenomenon (de Haan 1994, 1999); the decline of the Kanpur textile mills now forces workers back to their ancestral villages (Joshi 1999); and skilled male gem-cutters in rural Tamil Nadu have been driven wholesale into itinerant agricultural labour (Kapadia 1999). The reel runs backwards—from factory to field.

Not only in India. Ferguson (1999) provides a powerful critique of the linear assumptions he attributes (with some overstatement perhaps)[1] to the Rhodes-Livingstone scholars, and to Gluckman their mentor. They are taken to task on their home Copperbelt territory, where the collapse of mine profitability has led to a dramatic increase in urban poverty, decrease in life expectancy and disillusionment with the old teleological

[1] See, for example, Gluckman's Foreword to Watson's *Tribal cohesion in a money economy* (1958), in which he stresses the precariousness of the migrant labourer's position in town, and his consequent need to maintain his rural subsistence base. Tribal cohesion persists because of, rather than despite, the conditions he confronts in the new industrial economy. See also Grillo 2000.

certainties by which Zambians themselves were also deluded. But history—they find—has gone into reverse: *de*-urbanisation (out-migration now exceeds in-migration), *de*-industrialisation and the return of nationalised mines to foreign ownership. Links with rural kin have acquired a new material significance; and workers today are more likely to cultivate a 'localist' cultural style with which their rural relatives can more readily identify. Of a sample of fifty retiring miners, forty-seven were going 'home' to villages with which some have had little contact for years and their children may never have visited. Though many are destined to eke out only the most pitiful existence there, remaining in town is no longer an option. The evolutionary trajectory has not proved linear, and the Rhodes-Livingstone ethnographers could only suppose that it was by focusing on one particular segment of the working class at one particular point in time.

In what follows I focus on long-distance rural migrants to the central Indian steel town of Bhilai—that is, migrants from other Indian states. Like Copperbelt towns, Bhilai is an 'industrial monoculture'. Not only its 'core' production workers, but also its 'multiplier' population who provide them with goods and services, are therefore extremely exposed to downturns in the market for steel and engineering products (Crook 1993a: ch. 5). Against this background I broach the question of the extent to which the move from field to factory has become a one-way transition.

It is obvious that, unlike the Zambian miner, no retrenched or retiring Indian industrial worker can expect to petition his village headman for land or lay claim to uncultivated bush. A rural labour market that is glutted already provides little incentive for landless migrants to return to their villages. It is equally obvious that since independence there has been an important shift in the demographic balance between India's rural and urban populations. Though much of the increase results from declining urban death rates and the redrawing of urban boundaries, at least some of it must be explained by migrant settlement (Crook 1993a: ch. 2; Skeldon 1985; Weiner 1978: 35–36). The 'modernisation theory' assumption that a significant current does flow in the direction of industrial urbanism as an enduring pattern of life is hard to entirely gainsay.

The force of this current, however, clearly fluctuates with economic booms and busts; and its strength is differently felt by different segments of the migrant labour force according to the kind of employment they have in town, and their positions in the caste and class hierarchies of their villages of origin. The issue is further complicated by the fact that it may only be finally clear after years (even a generation or two) whether

many migrants are sojourners or settlers, part of a rural exodus or a pattern of rotating migration (cf. Sharma 1987). Their stated intentions, often uncertain and provisional, are seldom a reliable guide. Migration decisions are commonly said to be part of a 'household strategy' (e.g., De Haan 1993; Chopra 1995). As Gardner's (1995: 100ff) material suggests, however, migrants may see themselves less as strategisers than as gamblers playing in a high risk game of chance; while my own data point to the often haphazard, spontaneous and opportunistic way in which the decision to migrate is taken. When the job has ended, the decision to stay or go home has a similar air of contingency.

These may not of course be the only alternatives. Migrants from the same village or kin group often fan out to several different destinations that their networks then link together. In a number of my case histories, these destinations include ones outside India, making it possible for people to imagine a golden future abroad and impossible for us to treat national and international migration separately.

The first proposition that I want to argue here is that for the most privileged segments of Bhilai's industrial labour force, those with jobs in its public sector steel plant, industrial urbanism does become a way of life and that migration does increasingly tend to be a one-way transition towards it. But I also want to suggest (though rather more tentatively) that as we move down the industrial hierarchy, from this aristocracy of labour to less privileged segments of the organised sector working in private sector factories, to those on the fringes of the organised sector and outside it, this tendency declines and that a pattern of rotating migration is increasingly likely.

My second proposition has to do with the well-established propensity for north Indian male migrants to come to the industrial areas alone (bringing their wives and children to join them only much later, if at all). South Indians, by contrast, generally migrate as families (Crook 1993a: chs. 2 and 3; de Haan 1994; Holmström 1984: 68–69). The expected corollary does not, however, follow. Holding the kind of enterprise they work for constant, north Indian workers are no more (and no less) likely than their southern counterparts to eventually return home.

There are, as we will see, important practical reasons to stay. But there are also—my third proposition—incentives of a more ideological sort. A creation of the Nehruvian nationalist imagination during the first decade after India's independence, Bhilai and its steel plant were seen as bearing the torch of history, and as being as much about forging a new kind of

society as about forging steel. Bhilai was one of a handful of mega-projects which were designed to abolish centuries of backwardness and to kick-start a new era of industrial modernity. Not merely management rhetoric, this vision has been internalised to a significant degree by much of its workforce. Small wonder, then, that—notwithstanding some flickering nostalgia for supposedly rural virtues (pure ghee, dutiful daughters, unlocked doors, and so forth)—the village has come to stand for the antithesis to Bhilai as a beacon of progress. Less because of its lack of electricity (and other modern amenities) than because of its abstract moralised qualities of 'backwardness', 'bigotry', 'illiteracy' and lack of 'civilisation', the village has now come to seem like an area of darkness. And for reasons that should become obvious, this sense of the gulf that separates the two worlds runs deepest amongst those who belong to the aristocracy of labour.

Of a piece with this, I suggest, is that the migration narratives of many of my informants are characteristically cast in a surprisingly individualist mould and commonly (often apparently gratuitously) emphasise the rupture with those left behind. 'Surprisingly individualistic' because the evidence suggests that in fact most workers arrived on the backs of kin and co-villagers who had come on before. So why do these stories take the form that they do? At least part of the answer, I suspect, lies in the fact that long-distance migration is not only a matter of miles. Most migrants are conscious of having also travelled a long way in attitudes, outlook and style of life. They are now 'modern' workers. Migration, that is, has involved a transformation of the 'self', and this is expressed in the narrative stress on their individual journeys. And again, this sense of self-transformation is most marked amongst those at the top of the industrial hierarchy. They have indeed come a long way, and it is not surprising that they develop some psychological resistance to retracing their steps.

II
Some historical background

Until the mid-1950s, Bhilai was a small village located in the Durg district of Chhattisgarh. That village now gives its name to a large 'company township', the site of one of the biggest steel plants in Asia. The Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP for short) is a public sector undertaking which was constructed with the fraternal aid and collaboration of 'anti-imperialist'

Soviet Union under an agreement signed in 1955. By 1959 it had produced its first steel.

BSP was to epitomise the Nehruvian dream of a modern, self-reliant, secular India. Nehru himself described it as 'a symbol and portent of the India of the future'. The Congress President (Sanjiva Reddy) saw it as 'a modern temple of Indian prosperity', while an official history of the plant recalls that laying the concrete foundations of the first blast furnace began on the very day that the Rani of Jhansi had captured the Gwalior Fort one hundred years before (Srinivasan 1984: 58). Some sense of the ideological ambience of the time is conveyed by Ved Mehta's account of his visit. Of the local poets who wrote for an anthology that BSP put out to mark Republic Day in 1965, he observes that they appear

> intoxicated by the possibilities of industrial society, and—perhaps because they are standing only at its threshold—there are no poems in praise of the Luddite. Instead, the poems celebrate the factory worker and the factory town. It sometimes seems that all the incentive reserved in the West today for the robots of the industrial society is here turned against the laggards of the pastoral society. To the poets with no spleen, machines operating are as romantic as sheep grazing (Mehta 1967: 298).

Indeed, as I have shown elsewhere (Parry 1999a), in the realm of production there is almost no hankering after the peasant past. If there is one thing that can be safely said on the subject of alienation in BSP, it is that workers feel alienated from agriculture in which they are increasingly de-skilled, and of which they are generally scornful.

Despite the claims of technology, however, it was in fact social as much as technical considerations that determined the plant's location. Employment was as prominent as profits in the planning priorities of the time, and the project was by design situated in a remote and 'backward' rural area. With a workforce of around 18,000 by 1961 (double that provided for in the original plan which was double that of European plants with the same capacity), by the mid-1980s BSP—along with its subsidiary mines and quarries—had some 65,000 workers on its direct pay-roll, and had expanded its capacity from one to four million tonnes. By the start of my fieldwork in 1993, the direct workforce had been reduced to 55,000 (though BSP was also providing employment to perhaps a further 8,000 temporary contract workers each day). Now standing at around

42,000, the target is a further reduction of 6,000 jobs over the next two years. By then the town's major employer will have shed some 30,000 regular jobs in fifteen or so years. Profit now takes precedence over employment provision.

The plant itself covers an area of nearly 17 square kilometres. A little removed from it is the more recently built industrial estate with some 200 smaller-scale private sector factories. Immediately fringing the plant's perimeter walls is its spacious and orderly township. Laid out in sectors, each has its own market and schools, and a mix of housing—bungalows with lawns for managers; matchbox houses and barrack-like blocks for the workers. Elsewhere the perimeter fence abuts onto what still look like rural villages; while at other points the plant and the township are surrounded by a sea of unregulated urban sprawl which envelops old villages like Girvi, Patripar and Nijigaon in which much of my fieldwork was done, and into which many migrant workers from other corners of the country have now moved. Most of the original villagers stayed on, and the lucky ones have jobs in the steel plant. Lucky because the BSP workforce is the local aristocracy of labour, enjoying pay, perks and benefits that make them the envy of every other working-class family in the area (Parry 1999a, 2000).

Though local job creation was one of its primary objectives, the villagers from around the new plant were initially reluctant recruits to its labour force. Two reasons are invariably cited. The first is that their consumption needs were extremely limited, and that they saw no reason to work more than was required to meet them. Those who still had fields preferred to farm them, while those whose land had been compulsorily purchased for the plant and the township,[2] and who now had only their compensation money in lieu, preferred to eat and drink and let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. By contrast with an orientation to a long-term future that is characteristic of many BSP families today, and that is evidenced by their heavy investment in education, these expropriated peasants considered the lilies of the field and opted to live for the moment (cf. Day et al. 1999). That choice is partly explained by the second reason they give for their hesitation to take BSP jobs. It was widely believed that thousands of human sacrifices (*balis*) would be necessary to get such a massive plant going. Workers were supposedly

[2] For the whole complex (including the mines), land was requisitioned from ninety-six villages. Those located within what are now the plant and township boundaries have entirely disappeared.

being thrown into the foundations to make them strong, or into the furnaces to make them function.[3]

But this picture of widespread local avoidance must be qualified in two ways. First, it was relatively short-lived. As with the bridges and forts built by rajas, *balis* were only called for at the time of foundation, and with the completion of the plant's initial construction phase in the mid-1960s, the immediate danger had passed and the benefits of a BSP pay-packet had become increasingly palpable. Second, those who had themselves left the area as migrant workers returned with alacrity. Agriculture in this region had been insecure, and its villages prone to drought, crop failure and famine. A series of very lean years in the last decade of the 19th century saw the start of significant labour migration to the Assam tea gardens. Later the jute mills around Calcutta, the rail centre at Kharagpur, the collieries of southern Bihar and the new Tata steel town of Jamshedpur would be the favoured destinations. Though elsewhere more broadly recruited, the migrant labourers from the ex-villages-cum-labour colonies in which I worked were almost exclusively Satnami—the largest untouchable caste in the region (Parry 1999b). Almost all of them rapidly returned once new employment opportunities were available.

For the most part, however, it was migrant labour from outside the region, which built the plant and provided the skills it required. Workers flooded in from every corner of the country, and so great was the demand for them that BSP and the big contractors had trucks waiting at the Durg railway station to transport them straight to the site. Many did not speak Hindi; few could follow the Chhattisgarhi dialect. Some camped in the now abandoned houses of villages which were about to disappear or on the building sites on which they were working; others made temporary shelters out of woven mats in villages like Patripar and Nijigaon. In the morning they might set out for the plant and in the evening be unable to find their way back because the whole landscape had been transformed by bulldozers.

As they represent it today, these outsiders brought civilisation to Chhattisgarh where until their arrival there was 'nothing'. And though the *daus* and *malguzars* of the area—its landed elite—may wax lyrical about the pastoral idyll these outsiders destroyed, their civilising mission is widely acknowledged by those with less stake in the ancien regime. Now retired workers, but then lads in their teens, still recall the spell-binding marvel of the magically enchanted technology they brought with

[3] I discuss these stories of sacrifice in detail in a forthcoming paper (Parry n.d.).

them. Chandrika[4] remembers running barefoot to Power House to peer through chinks in the mat-walled cinema; remembers *Sansar* as one of the most frightening experiences of his life since he imagined its ghosts to be real; remembers that when shooed away from their peepholes they would watch equally rapt the water-powered generator that ran the projector. It is true that they were terrified of the big burly Sikhs with their long flowing beards, turbans and daggers, and never questioned their elders' conviction that they had come to rob and kill them; and it is true that they were puzzled by how much of a Sunday the 'full-pant-*vale babus*' (long-trousered clerks) would devote to prowling the perimeters of the village tank for a glimpse of bare breast as the local girls bathed. But these outsiders had money in their pockets and were the harbingers of an exciting, if scary, new age.

By 1961, nearly 60 per cent of the male population of the Durg-Bhilai urban agglomeration (today one continuous urban sprawl) had been born in another state, and of those employed in manufacturing 78 per cent were aged between fifteen and thirty four. The majority were of rural origin and had arrived from all over India within the last three years. Initially men heavily outnumbered women, but something like a balance was quite quickly restored as they brought their wives and children to join them (Crook 1993a: ch. 3). Southerners (especially Tamils and Telugus) did so promptly; northerners (especially Bhojpuris) after some considerable delay and sometimes never. The pattern is general and long-standing,[5] but the reasons for it unclear—possibly a higher incidence of landlessness amongst southern migrants (Holmström 1976: 11; cf. Connell et al. 1976: 12–13); possibly a 'tradition' born of different patterns of industrialisation (more light industry in the south with a higher demand for female labour), and very likely at least partly a product of different gender norms (Crook 1993a: 16). Between 1961–1971 the population almost doubled, and it doubled again during the following decade. Given the 'lumpiness' of its age structure resulting from such large-scale immigration at the start of the plant, the number of local labour force entrants reached a peak in the early 1980s. The problem was mitigated by BSP's expansion and it was not until the 1990s—when 'liberalisation' began to bite—that it became really acute.

In its early days when it needed much more labour, skills and industrial experience than was locally available, BSP actively encouraged recruits

[4] Pseudonyms are employed throughout.

[5] It is already clear from the 1911 Census (Crook 1993a: 16).

from outside. It is also possible that management calculated that a migrant labour force—especially one which was so regionally heterogeneous—would prove more compliant (Crook 1993a: 35–37). But for such Machiavellian motives there is little hard evidence; and—though management certainly perceives migrants as better workers and as less prone to absenteeism—I suspect that recruitment policy at that time had as much to do with the post-independence ideology of national integration. It was the new India that was being built in Bhilai.

It certainly *was* management strategy, however, to attract a core workforce of skilled operatives who would have a long-term commitment to their jobs and would bring their families to join them. Hence the township, the BSP schools, the most modern hospital in the region, Maitri Bagh ('Friendship Garden') with its boating lake, zoo and musical fountain, and all the rest. The monetary value of the fringe benefits would soon amount to *at least* 50 per cent on top of the cash wage (Crook 1993b: 348). That was not just benevolence. Steel production needed a stable workforce. It was the opposite of the business strategies which Chandavarkar (1994) describes for the Bombay textile mills (as flexible a labour force as possible), and—even if this is *state* capitalism—of the way in which capitalism is sometimes supposed to behave (by shifting the costs of reproducing labour back onto the 'domestic' economy, according to Meillassoux [1981]).

But this of course goes for the aristocracy of labour with BSP jobs, and Meillassoux's argument is more applicable to the multiplier workforce that is required to provision them, and to the workers in the private sector factories that soon opened on the industrial estate. To them, the educational, medical and residential amenities that BSP provided for its own workforce have never been freely available, and most wind up living in the congested ex-villages and labour colonies which have mushroomed on the perimeters of the plant and the township.

III
Pioneer narratives

According to Crook (1993a: 33), the construction workers who built the public sector steel plants, and the production workers who actually manned them, constituted two separate migration streams, and the former were not taken on as core-sector labour. Connell and collaborators (1976: 10ff) have concluded that migrants have tended to be drawn from the two poles of rural society; and it is plausible to suppose some congruence

between these poles and the division between the production and construction workforce. Migrants, that is, from the most prosperous and best-educated strata of village society were likely to be employed as plant operatives, while those from the poorest and least educated strata were recruited as construction site coolies. But while at an aggregate level this is probably true, quite a few of my informants amongst the oldest cohort of BSP workers originally came as building-site labour.

A vast army was employed on earthworks, laying foundations and excavating the huge tank at Maroda. The largest contingents were Telugus and Oriyas from the famine-prone districts nearest Chhattisgarh (like Srikakulam in Andhra, and Kalahandi and Bolangir in Orissa). There were a good many Tamils too, and the Tamils and Telugus generally arrived in mixed sex gangs recruited by a contractor. Few opted to remain, but Srikiran's father was one who stayed on. He belongs to a caste of Telugu-speaking leather-workers (Arunthathiyar), and comes from a village in Tamil Nadu's Salem district. The only single man in a party of around thirty couples and their children from his and neighbouring villages, he arrived in Bhilai on 21 October 1957, at the age of eighteen. They got down at Durg, walked all the way to Bhilai 3, and next day started digging foundations for the rail tracks. Thirty-two to a tent, in his there were Chhattisgarhis, Biharis, Malayalis and Marathis. While those he had come with all went back, he joined BSP's non-muster roll, and in February 1962 was given a permanent job in traffic control by its Transport and Diesel Department. Though he had never been to school, he taught himself to read and write Hindi, and enough English to understand the shunting schedules. Employment secured, he went home to get married, returning with his wife to Bhilai where they were assigned the quarter in which they still live in a slum district outside the township in which BSP has some housing. His eldest son now has a job with one of the largest private sector engineering firms on the industrial estate; while Srikiran is a smart young technician on the BSP Coke Oven batteries.

Yusuf also came in 1957. He is a Sunni Muslim (a Mian, he emphasises) from a village close to the Khetri copper mines in Rajasthan. He first left home for Bombay where his father had worked, where he learned his trade as a mason and lodged with other Mians from home. After violent riots targeted at outsiders by the 'sons-of-the-soil', Yusuf left the city to work on a dam project in Mirzapur (UP). He detested that job because the site was so isolated, and after six months or so was back in Bombay with the Hindustan Company. They had a contract in Bhilai, and two packed railway carriages of company workers were sent in his batch and

given mat-quarters behind the Power House market. At the time, and now he kicks himself, BSP were desperate for workers with skills and he could easily have had a permanent job in the plant. But that was before the era of public sector wage inflation, and he would have earned only Rs 75 per month. He was making Rs 6 per day. When his company pulled out of Bhilai, he found a job with another of the big construction firms with a contract at one of the BSP mines. When that company shifted its operations back to Bhilai, Yusuf set himself up as a subcontractor laying drainage channels for the housing colony they were building. He lived alone in Patripar until 1983 when he eventually brought his wife and children to join him. One of his brothers, who has since returned to their village, worked a spell in Saudi Arabia, where the eldest of Yusuf's three sons has now gone. The other brother is a mason in Bombay but was previously in Dubai, while the other two sons are at home in Patripar and have had a series of temporary jobs while they wait with increasing desperation for a 'call' from the plant or a 'chance' in the Gulf.

But in those early years much of the migration of skilled workers was more individualistic. Many of them came alone and 'on spec' from other industrial centres, having heard through the grapevine of the opportunities opening up in Bhilai, or having seen advertisements in the newspapers. When Laksmi Narayan Chaube left his Ghazipur village (in eastern Uttar Pradesh) he was twenty. His parents had been reluctant to let him go and there had been a row, but he was determined 'to see the world' and earn money. In the village they had food to eat, but he dreamed of a bicycle and radio. His first destination was the Damodar dam project in Bengal where he stayed for five years before moving on to Jamshedpur where he spent the next two and learned to operate a crane. He read about Bhilai in the papers. That was in 1958. On the day of his arrival he registered at the Employment Office. On the next he was taken on as a crane operator in the BSP Foundry.

Some of these early migrants seem to have set out with only the haziest idea of where they were going or what they were in for. Santu is a 'tribal' from Sivan district (Bihar). Word about Bhilai had reached their village and Santu left with a party of ten or twelve lads to find work there. But they thought that it was in the Punjab and so went west. By the time they learned otherwise, the *sattua*—the powdered preparation of parched gram they carried with them as iron rations—had all but run out, and they had to head home. Later Santu heard of some people from a neighbouring village who were on leave from the plant and with whom he could travel. But he still hardly knew what a factory was. *Naukari* ('employment')

was the police or the railways; and after their marriage his wife would ask him on his trips back home what the word really meant.

From the other end of the country, and dispatched by his father after passing his tenth class exams in 1959, Premadasan Nayar set out from 'Valiyagramam'—the Kerala village in which the Osellas (2000) did fieldwork—to join relatives in Rourkela (another new steel town in Orissa). Irked by his father's managing ways, on the train he got chatting to some fellow Malayalis who had decided him to make for Bhilai instead. At the start it had seemed a rash choice. Without contacts there, he gravitated to Tituruti, a slum of temporary shacks near Durg railway station where many newly arrived Malayalis congregated; and he spent a couple of worrying months in search of employment while his money ran out and his irate father sent telegrams. Saved by a temporary typing job in a BSP office, he is now a Junior Manager and will shortly retire back to Valiyagramam—where his mother still lives and his brother looks after their land.

Or take Ayodhya Prasad Mishra, a Brahman whose family of small-time *zamindars* from Gorakhpur district (in eastern Uttar Pradesh) had fallen on hard times as a result of a ruinous land dispute. On a trip to town he had run into a Muslim boy with whom he had been at school. The latter told him that people from his village had recently gone to Bhilai where 'bank-notes flutter (in the breeze). You just pick up as many as you want'. One of these migrants was a certain Pande (another Brahman) who would surely help him. Without a word he left home the next day. With a harvest of bank-notes there would be time to explain. The journey took nearly three days and the search for Pande was protracted. When found—in a lean-to shack in Camp 1 which he was currently sharing with nine other Gorakhpur 'guests'—he was less than effusively welcoming. But Ayodhya was fortunate to be almost immediately offered a job as a temporary BSP storeman. His problem was then to get this position regularised, and for that he sought out an officer from back home. Though first time round his petition was brusquely dismissed, persistence paid off and his compatriot 'did the needful'.

While in the matter of BSP jobs it is today every man for himself, in that more solidary era, shared regional ethnicity counted for something. Indeed it is endlessly said—and not only by workers (I was told the same thing by one of BSP's first Personnel Directors)—that every General and Deputy General Manager went out of his way to recruit labour from his own home state. But though many of the stories about how these early migrants first found employment involve an appeal to regional

loyalty, many others take the form of a stereotyped boast about individual *savoir-faire* and adroitness. The new arrival is wandering about the site in search of a job and watches a group of workers struggling with some intractable task—a malfunctioning machine or whatever. The story-teller swiftly solves the problem, and the officer in charge is so impressed that he takes him on on the spot. The idea that 'merit' is the proper basis for allocating jobs is certainly present also (cf. Holmström 1976: 49–50).

The most striking feature of these narratives, however, is how rarely they feature family obligation or coercion as a motive for migration, and how often mere acquaintances would spontaneously tell me that the reason for leaving home was a family quarrel. Sometimes the circumstances were dramatic—a love marriage or a murder. But for the most part they were not; the immediate catalyst was some apparently trivial domestic altercation and the breach in relations is now ostensibly healed. Why, I have wondered, are such stories so common? Possible because they are true—in which case they seem to suggest that long-distance labour migration is a rather more individualistic affair than is often supposed, and rather less commonly a matter of calculated household strategy. But as we shall see in a subsequent section, most migrants follow a path already well-trodden by others in their network, and few can in fact have been the lone pioneers that their stories are apt to suggest.[6]

It therefore seems plausible to suppose that these narratives might say as much about current attitudes as about past events. It is, for example, possible that they are a way of distancing oneself from people with whom one has increasingly little in common, and of downplaying one's responsibilities and obligations to them. If provoked by a quarrel, migration more clearly marks a rupture with those left behind. And it is indeed generally the case that once their wives and children have joined them, the remittances which workers send home become increasingly irregular. It is, however, also possible that what these stories reflect is the individual's experience of migration as a kind of metamorphosis, and his (or her) sense of having become in the process a different—and perhaps more autonomous—person. Rather than being a self-serving justification for dumping village kin, what the remembered quarrels would then mark and stress is the crucial moment of separation from a previous existence. If—in the absence of elaborate rituals of separation (like those that

[6] Though her analysis takes her informants' accounts at face value, Wolf's (1992) ethnography of factory women in Java reveals a similar contradiction between their own picture of individual autonomy and a good deal of evidence which suggests something different.

Stafford [1999] discusses for China)—quarrels did not happen, it might be necessary to invent them. But in even the most harmonious families they sometimes do, and in most they must be sufficiently frequent for sharp words exchanged at around the time that the migrant left to provide plenty of scope for memory to transform them into the *reason* for leaving.

IV
An industrial melting pot?

In any event, many of those who came to Bhilai near the start now identify with it much more strongly than they do with their village homes. To their children, of course, these are often quite alien; and both generations take a positive pride in Bhilai's cosmopolitanism. It is, they boast, 'a mini-India'.

It is true that even forty years on, regional identities continue to be marked in terms, for example, of diet, dress, the worship of deities and the language of home. It is in the 'home' rather than the 'world' that the distinctions are most manifest, and the maintenance of them is significantly gendered. Even after years in Bhilai, the Hindi spoken by many south Indian women remains rudimentary. In the masculine space of the plant, regional ethnicity is the focus of legitimised joking; but outside the topic is more touchy and ethnic stereotyping has a harder edge. Malayalis are clever, cunning and clannish, and always get on; Telugus are feckless and often inebriated, and generally do not. Where there are Bengalis there is *netagiri* (political boss-ism), and where 'Biharis', *dadagiri* (gangsterism). This last identity (which includes people from eastern Uttar Pradesh) is particularly strongly freighted and Bhilai's social problems are routinely laid at their door.

It is, however, the opposition between Chhattisgarhis and outsiders that has real political valence. 'The sons-of-the-soil' complain bitterly that it was they who gave up their land for the plant and who should now be preferred for employment. And the outsiders say that it was their blood and sweat which built the plant in the first place while the locals trembled in fear and squandered their patrimony. But though the sense of ethnic identity and difference is clearly a consequence of migration (Rogaly et al, this volume), a lid is nevertheless kept on the simmering antagonisms by the very strong solidarities that develop within BSP work-groups, which almost invariably consist of both locals and outsiders (Parry 1999a). Being a BSP chargeman, crane operator or loco driver becomes, moreover, quite as salient an identity in a large number of contexts as

being a Brahman or Bengali; and especially if one lives in the township it probably means more to the neighbours (cf. Grillo 1999). Political polarisation is also muted by the fact that both categories are deeply divided—the Chhattisgarhis by the opposition between the so-called 'Hindu' castes and the untouchable Satnamis (Parry 1999b), the outsiders by region of origin, and Chhattisgarhis and outsiders alike by class differentiation. The economic fortunes and the life-styles of even those migrant workers who belong to the same caste, come from neighbouring villages and started out life in Bhilai in almost identical circumstances, have sometimes diverged quite dramatically.

With time, moreover, and especially in the BSP township and amongst the generation which has been born and raised in Bhilai, a more composite cosmopolitan cultural style and consumption pattern has clearly developed. Amongst the young, most sociability revolves around neighbours, work-mates and schoolfellows who come from different regions. A great many marriages are arranged with families from the same caste and region who are also settled in Bhilai; some are arranged across caste and/or regional boundaries, and an increasing number of young people elope with someone unsuitable. While in the 1970s Malayalam movies routinely played to packed houses, today they are never screened. Once active cultural associations of fellow countrymen—like the Bhilai Malayala Granthshala (which ran a now moribund library) and the Sri Narayan Guru Dharma Samajam (a largely Izhava organisation for the promotion of Narayana Guru's teachings)—are now largely left with the function of providing a dwindling band of old men with a forum for airing their disappointment at their sons' lack of interest. At least in the public space patronised by the aristocracy of labour, it is in many ways a melting-pot culture. And what that culture will tolerate may sometimes be quite at variance with the standards of the migrant's original home. A couple of years back, the highest bidder for the right to fish the Girvi village tank was a middle-class Jain from Jaipur.

In the township sectors, managers and workers inhabit the same space, and housing is theoretically assigned according to fixed bureaucratic procedures that are blind to ethnicity, caste and religion. While in practice the rules may be bent, there is no question here of ethnic or religious enclaves. Though Faridnagar, a predominantly Muslim suburb, is a conspicuous exception, this is also true of the private housing colonies. In ex-villages-cum-labour colonies like Patripar and Nijigaon, the picture is more patchy. In most neighbourhoods outsiders are promiscuously

scattered amongst Chhattisgarhis, but a few have been taken over by migrants from a particular area—often people of the same caste with the same informal sector occupation. In Patripar, for example, there are two lines of single-storied mud-brick cottages exclusively populated by Ganha rickshaw-*vale* from Orissa. In one line live a set of interrelated families from Kalahandi district; in the other they almost all come from Bolangir. Elsewhere are a score or so interrelated households of waste paper and scrap dealers from Sivan district in Bihar. Pocock's (1960) much-quoted claim that 'the sociology of India's urban and rural population may not be divided between urban and rural sociologies' is plainly more plausible for some urban milieus than others.

V
Migrant networks

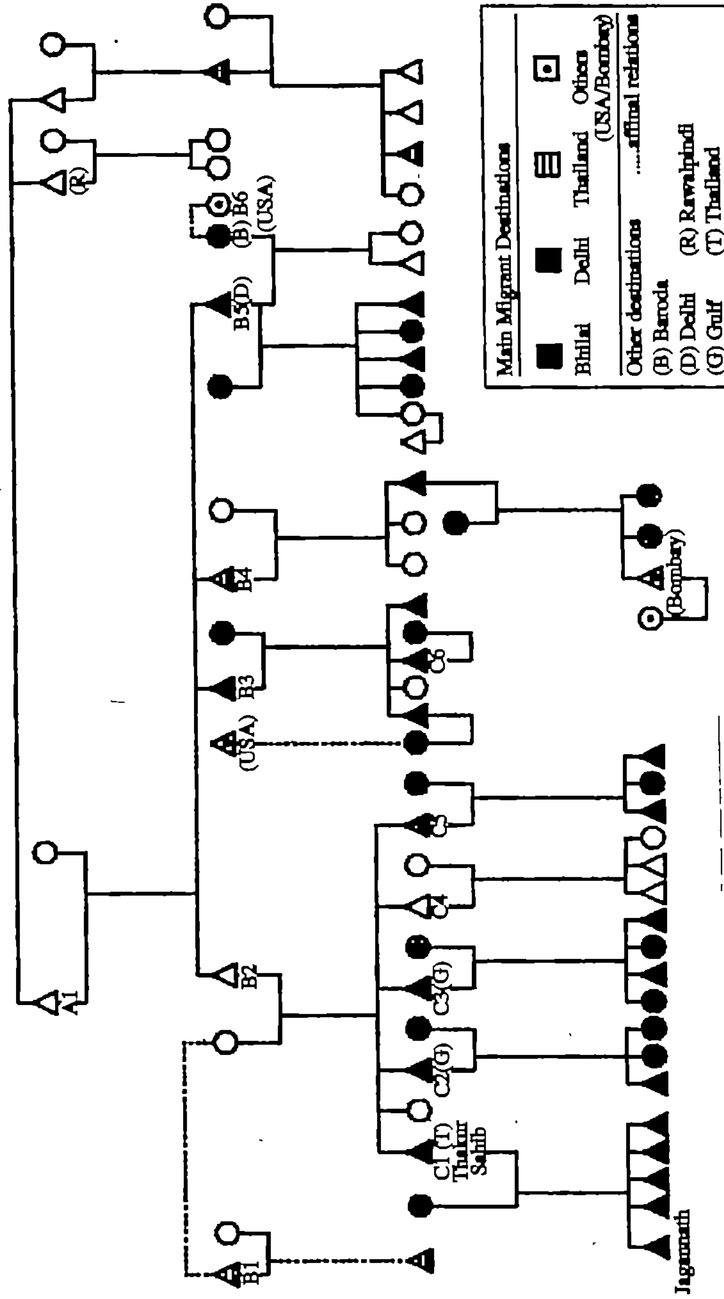
Many migrant households maintain close ties not only with their villages of origin but also with kin and co-villagers who have migrated elsewhere, and who are a source of information and help with alternatives when the prospects look bleak in Bhilai. Sometimes these networks cross national frontiers: some Bhilai families have operated in a 'globalised' labour market for several generations, and have as many close kin in Bangkok or Bahrain as back home in Bhojpur or Trichur. Such families seem to develop 'a culture of migration' (Pieke 1999: 16) in which even when home in the village, the long-term migrant watches the urban job market as anxiously as his peasant brother watches the weather and the price of grain.

Case 1

Jagannath's family (Figure 1) are from Nilgaygaon, a village in Gorakhpur district, eastern Uttar Pradesh. They are members of its landed elite and its dominant caste—martial Rajputs with a tradition of rule. Even in Bhilai their women scarcely go out of the house, and in the village they do not even cross the courtyard to go to the well.

Nilgaygaon and the surrounding villages have long been involved in migration. Its sons have worked all over India and in several Gulf states (where two of Jagannath's Delhi uncles—C2 and C3—were previously). In earlier generations, the favoured destinations were Rawalpindi, Malaya and Burma; but over the past few decades the main concentrations are in Delhi (in particular in its telephone exchange), Bhilai (in particular in its

Figure 1



steel plant) and Bangkok, where sixty to eighty villagers now have factory jobs or engage in petty trade. The Rajputs mainly sell cloth and lend money.

Though Bahadur Chand, back from Thailand during my stay for the marriage of his daughter, is a member of a different lineage, Jagannath's father's father's brother (B4) had helped him get to Bangkok and establish a business selling newspapers door-to-door. He stuck with that for about ten years, but increasingly put his profit into cloth, which he initially peddled round the houses of his newspaper readers. That made him enough money to start lending at interest; and it is to this business that he now devotes himself, charging 20 per cent per month and advancing sums of up to Rs 50,000 to individual clients. He lives frugally on rent with other Gorakhpur migrants, and invests all his profits back home. His new combine harvester cost him Rs 1 million. By hiring it out it will pay for itself in three harvests. I watched it devour the village wheat crop—one acre in twenty minutes, work which during the previous harvest would have taken twenty labourers the whole of one day. The repatriation of profits by the village's migrant elite may clearly leave its poor with little alternative but to go themselves; and in Nilgaygaon many have called on their village patrons to help them do so. In preparation for the wedding, Bahadur Chand had just been to Singapore to buy a revolver. There would be large sums of money in the house. Dacoits raid these villages and target the Bangkok moneylenders.

Jagannath's father, 'Thakur Sahib' (C1), himself went to Thailand in 1972 to join his mother's brother (B1), and his black sheep *chacha* (his FyB, B4), a drinker who at the time of his death in 1998 had not been home for thirty years. They fixed him up with a job as a security guard in a Chinese-owned cloth mill. The 1,500 workers were exclusively Thai and the sixty-man security force exclusively Rajputs, Bhumihar Brahamans and Yadavs from Gorakhpur. His career as a guard lasted only two years. He had caught a Thai worker smuggling cloth through the gate and was stabbed in the stomach.

After that he stayed in Nilgaygaon until 1983 when he returned one day from the fields to announce that he would leave for Bhilai next morning. His parents and wife did their best to dissuade him, but Thakur Sahib knows his own mind. Two of his other *chachas*—Kartik and Ram Bhagat Chand (B3 and B5)—had been in Bhilai since the late 1950s and had secure and remunerative BSP jobs. Ram Bhagat was the real pioneer and the conduit through which his younger brother Kartik and perhaps a score of other young men from their Chamar, Teli and Yadav client

families had found employment in Bhilai. Patron-client ties also played a major role in the migration to Thailand.

For the first four years, Thakur Sahib lived with Ram Bhagat Chand and his family in a company quarter in the BSP township while he worked in one of the BSP mills. But when he brought his wife and young family to join him in 1987, they moved into a congested working-class neighbourhood on the wrong side of the tracks where they subsequently built a spacious *pakka* house on the architectural plan of the one in the village. They have prospered—largely because Thakur Sahib became the main union organiser for BSP's canteen workers. This has enabled him to establish a lucrative private catering business on the side; but more importantly he is now a right-hand man of the leader of the currently ascendant faction within the 'recognised' union which 'represents' the interests of the entire BSP workforce. In the current conflict over control of the union—in which another member of the extended family, an ex-boxer (C6), is also active—the traditional qualities of the Gorakhpur Rajput are a valuable asset.

Factory guard to union leader—it is a predictable career path for Rajputs from the region. De Haan (1994: 118) records their prominence in both avocations in the Calcutta jute mills. As far as I was able to discover, however, no Nilgaygaon migrants have ever worked in the Bengal mills, though there are certainly villages elsewhere in the district from which they have recruited significant numbers of hands (ibid.: 180). Even within a fairly small area, different villages specialise in different migrant destinations.

Back in Nilgaygaon, Jagannath's old family house—the 'mother' house, so to speak, from whose womb the opulent new mansions seeded by migrant remittances have emerged as the lineage proliferated and its constituent households partitioned—is being rebuilt. The owners of its most impressive and well-groomed offspring are in Thailand. By comparison with them, the mother house has an air of semi-permanent incompletion for it is now mainly a holiday home and a temporary refuge for migrants. Along with fifty acres of good arable land, it technically belongs to a coparcenary body consisting of all the male descendants of Jagannath's great-grandfather (A1). But the only one of them who really lives there is his *chacha*, Bhairav Chand (C4), who farms all the land.

I assume in self-conscious opposition to his suave cosmopolitan brothers, Bhairav cultivates the 'localist' style of a gruff, *dhoti*-clad, tobacco-chewing country landlord. Affecting to speak only the broadest Bhojpuri dialect, he doubles as an exorcist of evil spirits, and swaggers about the

village barking orders at his untouchable labourers and loudly deriding his effete Delhi brothers. The special butt of his scorn is his younger brother, Kamla (C5). He is one of the only other two male members of the family currently living 'at home'; and Bhairav complains that he is incapacitated from all useful labour by the fear of spoiling his trouser creases. He was largely brought up in Delhi where his father worked in the telephone exchange, which now employs two of his other brothers. Kamla had a job in a private bank which went bust a couple of years back, and has returned to the village to wait with fortitude until some other opportunity of salaried employment presents itself. Failing that, he might go to Bhilai to set up in business.

The other male member of the family living in the village at present is one forced to flee Bhilai. He is Kartik Chand, Jagannath's father's father's younger brother (B5)—a rather loose cannon who had run away to Bollywood at the age of eight, become a *sadhu* and done a spell in the Delhi telephone exchange before joining BSP's Heavy Maintenance Department in 1958. At the age of 58, he retired from the plant in 1994 with a Provident Fund pay-out of several lakhs, and significant capital derived from less transparent sources. He had a house in one of Bhilai's best housing colonies, a shop in one of its best markets and a lucrative business (now run by his grown-up sons) supplying building materials. On retirement, however, he took a new wife, a 22-year-old Gujarati girl brought up in Bhilai. Nobody in the family liked it, least of all the first wife and her sons, and it became expedient to go to Gujarat where Kartik built a house, bought a car and ran a tempo. After a couple of years and a couple of children, the marriage broke up. Kartik brought the children to Nilgaygaon. But now he worries about their anomalous caste status and was anxious for me to confirm that in the United States they take little note of it. His Gujarati wife's sister runs a nursing home near New York, has helped numerous people get Green Cards and 'married' five or six of them. Kartik is thinking of starting a new life.

But even without his problems, and as several other returned Nilgaygaon migrants vociferously complained, rural life is hard to take when you have lived outside for long. Within twenty-four hours of my arrival, 'the village as pastoral idyll' story was being replaced by 'the village as rural prison' one. As Kamla put it, Nilgaygaon is just 'a waiting room' from which neither he nor Kartik can escape too soon. Sojourners or settlers? the literature asks, but with reference to the place to which migrants *go*. Here, however, my overwhelming impression was that most now regard themselves as sojourners in the place from which they *came*. It is

certainly not quite the picture of the Bhojpur migrant's visceral 'commitment' to 'home' that one gets from other writings (e.g., de Haan 1994).

Case 2

Before their sons went to the Gulf, and before they themselves came to Bhilai, many now recently retired Malayalis had been in Ceylon and Malaya or had fathers working there. Krishna is an Izhava from an ancestral *taravad* located in rural Trichur. The Izhavas are traditionally regarded as a low caste, and are described as 'toddy-tappers' in the colonial era ethnography that also associates them with fraternal polyandry and matrilineal descent. But in the Izhava case, matriliny *was* doomed by British legislative reforms; and polyandry is now discountenanced. For more than a century, their aspirations for upward mobility have brought them into conflict with the Nayars and other high castes; and these aspirations have been boosted and funded by their geographical mobility as migrant workers (Osella and Osella 2000).

The detailed genealogy that Krishna helped me construct for his family is far too complex to reproduce here. What it shows, however, are nearly 200 individuals belonging to four generations to whom he is related through his father, his mother, or by affinal ties. In the senior ascending generation—that of Krishna's grandparents—several of the men were toddy-tappers. His father's father and brother were married polyandrously—in the first instance to a wife by whom there was one son and three daughters. When she died they took a second wife by whom they had nine children—all sons. Krishna's father, Rajappan, was the fourth of these boys.

Their elder half-brother—the son of the first wife—left the village for Sri Lanka as a migrant labourer, and the first five of the nine full brothers followed, Rajappan himself in 1946. He had a job making country cigarettes in Colombo where he stayed until 1964. By that time the political situation there had already made life so uncomfortable for Indian migrant workers that his other brothers had left. All of them except Aiyappan, the eldest of the nine. He had 'married' a Sinhalese wife, and Rajappan was the last member of the family to see or hear of him. The wife he had left in Kerala was taken on by the next brother, Shankaran.

In the meantime, the third of Rajappan's full brothers had set up a bridgehead in Bhilai. He went there early in the plant's construction phase and found a lucrative opening, going around the site with a large kettle selling tea. The profits were invested in a fast-food *dosa-idli* restaurant

near the Power House bus stand. Shankaran soon joined him to start a small buffalo herd, and one by one the other brothers arrived. Two had tailors' shops in Power House market, one helped run the 'hotel', and two got BSP jobs.

Rajappan himself bought a small poultry farm in Patripar, where his wife's sister's husband ran a tea-shop. The poultry business had been started by another Izhava from Trichur whose *taravad* was adjacent to that of his wife. Initially Rajappan lived with Vijay, who was this man's father's brother's son, and who had also just arrived. Vijay went into scrap recovery, and is now one of the biggest contractors in Bhilai. He lives in a magnificent mansion ('Vijay Villa') in Bhilai's most exclusive housing colony, has bought an estate in Kerala, and has two children at an exclusive Public School in Utti. The poultry farm went bankrupt and had to close down in the early 1990s.

Now Rajappan is the only one of the brothers left in Bhilai, having sold his share in the *taravad* property. All the others have recently retired back to the village—leaving the next generation to manage the businesses they had started. One of them lives in the old *taravad* house, three others in substantial new ones on the two-and-a-half acre plot that surrounds it, and the rest are within a few minutes' walk.

On Krishna's mother's side of the family, and in her generation, the pattern is more diverse—both in terms of class differentiation and the destinations of those who migrated. One brother has a photography studio in Bombay; a second was a Bombay textile worker and is now employed by a 'sanitary hygiene' company in Gujarat, while the youngest became a technician in the air force and went to Rouen for training in French missile technology. One sister's husband worked as a coolie on the excavation of the BSP tank and subsequently ran a tea-stall; another is a senior clerk in BSP's Purchase Department while a third is a toddy-tapper in the village.

Taking this parental generation as a whole, Krishna's genealogy contains thirty-seven males for whom I have occupational histories. Of these, only three have never worked outside Kerala—and one of them is a factory worker in a different part of the state. Of the remainder, eight spent part of their working lives in Sri Lanka, one in Malaya and Java, and nineteen in Bhilai. Of these, eight had BSP jobs.

Between them, Rajappan and his full brothers had twenty-two legitimate children—seventeen boys and five girls. While the fathers worked in Bhilai, they were brought up in their *taravad* under the indulgent gaze of their mothers and grandmother, and the ferocious eye of

Shankaran who had by the time of Krishna's earliest memories come back from Bhilai to discipline the children and drink himself to death. But as soon as they reached the ninth or tenth class, the boys would be shipped off to Bhilai to continue their education or help their father with his business. Now some of them are managing these concerns, some have moved into other niches, and some failed to find a niche at all. What is new, however, is that four are now Gulf migrants. The pattern is even more pronounced when we look at the genealogy as a whole. In Krishna's generation, it has forty males whose occupational histories I know. Of these twenty-one have, or previously had, jobs in Bhilai. Nineteen (including a few of the same individuals) have done at least one significant spell in the Gulf.

In every case, of course, they got there with considerable help from others in the kinship network. Though migrant narratives may stress family quarrels and individual initiative, most people in fact join other family members who had migrated before. It can be dangerous to do otherwise. When I visited Adhikari's village in Andhra, I was introduced to a distant kinsman who had believed that he was being enlisted in the army by two plausible gentlemen who had come to recruit in the village. He wound up in hospital in Gujarat waiting for a kidney removal. In the search for employment, kinship networks are not, however, the only ones relevant. I have already drawn attention to rural patronage ties; while in town, help and contacts may sometimes come from migrants from other regions who are neighbours or work-mates.

Krishna, for example, once found himself operating as an unpaid labour contractor, recruiting young men from Patripar for a small tile and brick-making factory run by a classificatory sister's husband in Kerala. The latter's problem was not so much the exorbitant cost of unskilled labour in Kerala as its unavailability. So many households in Trichur receive Gulf remittances that nobody will take on such menial employment. In Bhilai, day-labour is much cheaper; and in Patripar there are scores of young men with no work at all. So on a recent trip 'home', Krishna had been press-ganged into finding workers for his brother-in-law's factory. There was in fact a glut of eager recruits (some themselves from migrant families), and twelve neighbourhood lads were dispatched. The Malayali migrant *to* Bhilai found himself sending back migrants *from* Bhilai to plug a gap in the labour market left by migration. In the event they did not last long, and—though I do not have space for the details—the main reason for that is revealing. Their families panicked about their lack of a bridgehead in Trichur in the form of earlier family migrants who would

provide them with a safety net, and continually lobbied for them to come home.

VI
From factory to field?

By the end of the 1970s, the constant stream of long-distance migrants to Bhilai had significantly slowed; and—as this story suggests—its industries no longer need much of the labour it can offer. Nearly all direct BSP labour is now recruited through the local employment exchanges, and the only eligible candidates are those with educational qualifications obtained in the state.[7] Private sector industry can theoretically recruit labour from wherever it likes, but largely does so locally.

But if migrant labour is no longer arriving on a significant scale, is it now leaving at an accelerating rate? What has happened to those early pioneers who built Bhilai, and who over the past decade have retired in numbers? In the absence of systematic statistical data, it is difficult to be sure. BSP has no record[8] and those who have left are largely lost from the urban ethnographer's view. Nor are direct enquiries from retiring workers about their intentions a reliable guide to what happens. Many have yet to decide; many vacillate for several years, and many who declare a clear intention of returning home do not actually go. Circumstances change when an aged village parent suddenly dies, when a son is at last appointed to a post in the plant, or after a bout of bad health. Nor in many cases is the issue ever definitively resolved, for quite a few follow a compromise commuting strategy—moving back and forward between Bhilai and the village.

For BSP employees, the nearest I can get to a meaningful statistic is for the 214 workers who retired from its Foundry and Pattern Shop between January 1998 and July 2001. Exactly half (107) were long-distance migrants. Of these, fifty-three have stayed in Bhilai and seem likely to remain. Forty-seven have returned to their villages of origin and seven have moved elsewhere.

Even forty years on, some workers wallow in ostentatious nostalgia for the villages of their childhood—the Malayalis routinely complaining

[7] BSP recruitment procedures are discussed in more detail in Parry 1999b and 2000.

[8] Workers are entitled to re-location expenses at the time of their retirement but, whether they intend to move or not, nearly all claim them. No questions are asked and the allowance is in effect treated as an exgratia payment.

about the terrible weather in Bhilai and the lack of decent fish. But they also complain quite as loudly about the cost of living in Kerala and about being priced out of its land and housing market by Gulf remittances. As they represent it, Malayali *sojourners* in the Gulf *create* Malayali *settlers* in Bhilai. But some plainly suspect that the view of life back home in the village as seen from the smoke-stacks of Bhilai is anyway somewhat rose-tinted. Kurian Sahib, a Malayali Christian and a junior personnel manager on the industrial estate, writes short stories as a hobby. When I first met him, he had an idea for a new one. A Malayali with a job in Bhilai dreams of a life at home drinking coconut milk under a cloudless sky as the sea breeze whispers through the palm groves. And that is how it really seemed when he went on leave. But as soon as he resigns from his job in Bhilai, reality intervenes. On his previous visits, his wife was attentive and the children paragons. With every meal some delicacy, and he had only to want the newspaper for somebody to run and fetch it. But now that he was home for good, his wife was shrewish and scathing about his reckless renunciation of a regular salary, and his teenage daughter was rebellious and resentful at the discipline her father imposed. Kurian's central character realises his mistake, invents an offer of a better job in Bhilai, and dejectedly returns to look for employment and face the friends to whom he had confided his dream.

Many workers are harder-headed and mainly return on account of their land. Over the course of their careers, a significant proportion of BSP workers have more or less committed themselves to do so by extending their family holding. But others have bought land in villages round Bhilai rather than back in Bihar or wherever, and have that as an incentive to stay. Land, however, is not the only reason. BSP work regimes are fairly relaxed, soft credit from the company was until recently readily available, and many of the more enterprising workers have moonlighting occupations to which they devote more time and energy than they do to their jobs in the plant. D.N. Pande, for example, is a senior technician in one of the Steel Making Shops and comes from a village near Banaras. But he does not intend to return there because he has a lucrative business running two 'tempos' on the route between Power House and Durg, and is about to invest in two jeeps for hire as taxis. And if it isn't 'tempos' and jeeps, it's a PCO call office, a computer training centre or a motor-spares shop.

Unquestionably, however, the most important reason for staying on in Bhilai is that one's children have been raised there, are illiterate in Tamil or Bengali and have no chance of white-collar employment in

their 'home' state, do not feel comfortable in their parents' rustic villages and know nothing about agriculture. Even if the worker and his wife do return home, their sons are almost sure to remain and after their deaths are probably destined to have little close contact with an ancestral village in which they have never lived. What may be a real dilemma for the pioneer generation is unlikely to trouble the next. If circumstances should ever require them to move, it seems safe to suppose that they are rather more likely to move on to other urban destinations in which they already have relatives to offer a toe-hold than to return to their rural 'roots'. In an eighteen-month period following January 2000, thirty-seven well-qualified—and therefore unusually mobile—young men from 'outsider' families completed apprenticeships in one of Bhilai's largest private sector engineering firms. Six were taken on by the company itself. Eleven sought work elsewhere in the area; eleven had returned to their 'home' state (though none to their ancestral village), and nine had shifted to another state.

For those who face the choice at retirement, much depends on individual circumstance and on the stage in the developmental cycle of their domestic group. If the sons are employed in other towns or cities, if the daughters are married back 'home', the balance may be tipped in favour of returning to the village. If the children are still single, there are also marriage prospects and dowry calculations to consider.

BSP employees are a highly privileged segment of the local 'working class', and their privilege provides them with options which others do not have. At least in practical respects, they are much better placed than private sector workers to maintain their links with the village. A good wage makes it a good deal easier to maintain a flow of remittances to one's household of origin, to invest in land back home, to support a nephew or niece who has come to Bhilai to study, and to keep in regular touch by telephone with relatives located elsewhere. Not only are their leave entitlements considerably more generous, but until very recently they could get leave travel concession (LTC) after every two years. That is, they could claim reimbursement for first-class train travel for all the family (including dependent parents and siblings) to any destination within India they chose.

But if a BSP job makes it relatively easy to nurture one's roots, it also makes it easier to put down new ones in Bhilai. Subsidised company quarters in the township, or a generous housing allowance in lieu, made it feasible to bring the family to town, while easy credit from the company

made it possible to construct a house of one's own in one of the many new private sector housing colonies. The style and ambience of much of this housing is essentially middle class, which is what many of these families aspire to be.

Initially the children's education provided a powerful incentive to bring them. The standards in BSP schools have been consistently higher than in most government schools elsewhere, and—for those with qualifications—employment in Bhilai was in earlier years still relatively easy to obtain. Even today, BSP sons are for this reason at a considerable advantage in the labour market. Indeed, there is now a marked tendency for the plant labour force to reproduce itself (Parry 1999b). BSP fathers breed BSP sons, and BSP sons are a very good reason to stay on. As one approaches old age, so too is free medical treatment in the region's best hospital.[9]

But as I said at the start, there is I think more to it than pragmatism. Given their land and the lower cost of living, a good many who stay would certainly be materially better off in the village. But like many BSP workers, such people often pride themselves on having joined the 'modern' world, and have little nostalgia for rural privations or for the rigid social codes of the village, its 'illiteracy' and consequent lack of 'civilisation'. To these torch-bearers of 'progress', it can only seem retrograde to retreat into 'backwardness' and resume old village ways that now seem alien and antiquated.

Several Muslim northerners have told me that they have no desire whatsoever to return to the areas of Uttar Pradesh from which they originated on account of the communal savagery that now chronically afflicts them. Inter-caste violence between the untouchable Malas and dominant caste Kapus was one reason that Stephen—a Catholic Mala railwayman—left his village in Srikakulam (Andhra Pradesh). Though times may have changed there too, caste still remains a good reason for not going back. In Bhilai he unproblematically made an inter-caste marriage; amongst the congregation with whom he worships, his caste is not in most contexts

[9] During his career, a worker's whole family are entitled to free treatment, but even after retirement he and his wife remain eligible for the rest of their lives—provided only that they remain in Bhilai to receive it. Within the past couple of years, BSP has introduced an insurance scheme which will mean that post-retirement employees will be able to recover medical costs incurred anywhere in the country. But though the monthly deductions are very small, the take-up for this scheme has been minimal. Increasingly, most workers assume that they will stay in Bhilai and that there is, therefore, no point in joining.

a salient consideration, while in the railway colony in which he lives what counts for much more is his position in the union.

Company housing is important in more ways than one. In the BSP township and the railway colony, a man's identity as a chief steel-maker or a guard is likely to be more encompassing. There are, that is, more contexts in which it eclipses his identity as a Mala, a Catholic or a Telugu (cf. Grillo 1999). Nor is it only those who come from the bottom of the rural caste hierarchy who make a significant psychological investment in such roles. Brahmans and Banias seem hardly less committed to their BSP persona. They are likely to live in a company quarter, and their children are likely to have been born in the company hospital and to now attend company schools; and should they die while in service, the company will contribute to the funeral expenses and colleagues may carry the bier. Gluckman's aphorism can indeed be adapted: a Bhilai steelworker is a steelworker, and thinks of himself that way—for much of the time at any rate. Back in his village, however, that identity means little. Ram Avatar Shukla, a Brahman by caste and a chargeman in the BSP Coke Ovens when first I met him, retired to his Allahabad village in 1995 to manage a substantial family holding. Within a couple of years, however, he had returned to Bhilai. Village life did not suit him. People are too narrow-minded, too stuck in their ways. He had little in common with the friends of his childhood who had never worked outside; he was bored and he missed the plant gossip with his former work-mates.

In practical terms, private sector workers are very differently placed. Only a very small handful of the largest factories have any company housing, or provide housing loans or health cover—and these are hugely inferior to what is available to a BSP employee. The children of such workers will generally study at poorer schools and will consequently have poorer chances in the job market. While even in these post-liberalisation days BSP jobs still compete for security with those of the House of Windsor (which is to say that the slight draught they now feel is a new experience),[10] private sector workers know that they might at any time be retrenched, and the threat of prolonged unemployment makes it prudent to keep at least one foot in the rural economy. It is, therefore, not surprising that they are more likely than their BSP counterparts to return to their villages of origin.

[10] The significant reductions in the plant labour force over the past decade have been almost entirely made by minimal recruitment to replace the large number of workers who have reached retirement age or taken advantage of voluntary retirement incentives.

Out of 116 long-distance migrants who have 'separated' over the last three years from two of the largest and best-paying engineering companies on the industrial estate and for whose current whereabouts I have information, seventy-two have returned to their villages. That is, 62 per cent as compared to 44 per cent in the BSP sample. The difference is not perhaps dramatic, but I believe it is indicative. These two companies come as near as the private sector gets to BSP benefits and pay; and impressionistic evidence would certainly suggest that those who work in smaller, less modern, factories in which employment is more precarious, are even less likely to commit themselves totally to the urban industrial economy. They do not have anything like the same incentives to do so as BSP workers.

But again it is not only, I think, a matter of blunt circumstance. It is also a question of ethos and inclination. Migrant workers in private sector factories (and in the informal economy) are far more likely to spend their time in Bhilai in a social environment that is continuous with that from which they have come. In contrast with the social heterogeneity of the BSP work-group, they commonly work alongside kinsmen, caste-fellows and co-villagers from home; and it is through them—and consequently in the same neighbourhoods—that they find somewhere to live in town. The main explanation for this is that in order to evade the labour laws, private sector employers take on as few direct workers as they can. Most labour is at least nominally employed by a 'contractor'—characteristically a skilled former worker in the factory who is given charge of part of the process and who recruits his own kin or co-villagers to carry it out. Socially, if not spatially, many private sector workers may never really leave their villages at all, and their eventual return to them is far more clearly written into their scripts.

What I am suggesting then is that public and private sector workers are associated with rather different patterns of long-distance migration. The latter are more prone to a pattern of circulatory migration than their public sector counterparts, and I strongly suspect that this variation becomes increasingly marked as we move down the industrial hierarchy from modern large-scale factories in the organised sector to small workshops in the unorganised. Until, that is, the ranks of those who perform the most menial tasks on daily wages are reached. Much of this labour comes from landless households; much of it is untouchable, and the

attractions of 'home' may be slight. So rather than a single sharp break, there seems to be a gradient which varies in steepness—more like Holmström's (1984) metaphor of the mountain than Holmström's (1976) citadel image.

The picture is, of course, complicated where—as is not uncommonly the case—one brother is an employee of the Bhilai Steel Plant while another works in a private sector factory. Even if the two households are separate (which they probably are), the decisions of one may influence the other. Somewhat counter-intuitively, however, and though the numbers are very small, my data on separations from BSP's Foundry Shop and from the two private sector engineering companies do not support the hypothesis that regional origin significantly inflects the pattern. Though a circulatory pattern is typical of migrant labour from the Bhojpur region to the jute mills of Bengal, though they certainly went to Bhilai as single men who only much later brought their families to join them and sometimes never did, what data I have suggest that they are hardly less likely to put down urban roots than workers from other regions. Nearly half the Bhojpur migrants from the combined sample have remained in Bhilai (twenty-six out of fifty-six workers).

One reason perhaps is that—as I have shown elsewhere (Parry 2001)—a significant number of these 'Biharis' who had left their wives at home for long periods have entered into secondary unions with Chhattisgarhi women by whom they now have children. Some of these 'marriages' may have started as ones of convenience, but many are by now something more and provide an incentive to stay. But even without 'wives' and children to detain them, BSP workers from Bhojpur have also 'become modern', have helped to build Nehru's 'symbol and portent' of India's future, and have lived much of their lives in a cosmopolitan town. Having done so, the village is apt to seem narrow and oppressive, as Ram Avatar found; or just 'like a waiting room', as Jagannath's uncle complained. Indeed, the village may well look more 'backward' and 'conservative' to the BSP worker from Bhojpur than it does to his Malayali counterpart (for whom the contrast between rural and urban existence is in many ways less stark). In any event, umbilical ties to one's birthplace would seem to be less constraining, and 'primordial' commitments and ancestral culture more malleable to the interventions of the state, than is always acknowledged. That is as Nehru dreamt.

REFERENCES

Chandavarkar, R. 1994. *The origins of industrial capitalism in India: Business strategies and the working classes in Bombay, 1900–1940*. Cambridge: University Press.

Chopra, R. 1995. Maps of experience: Narratives of migration in an Indian village. *Economic and political weekly* 30, 49: 3156–62.

Connell, J., B. Dasgupta, R. Laishley and M. Lipton, eds. 1976. *Migration from rural areas: The evidence from village studies*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Crook, N. 1993a. *India's industrial cities: Essays in economy and demography*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1993b. Labour and the steel towns: The expectations of the Second Five-Year Plan. *In* P. Robb, ed., *Dalit movements and the meanings of labour*, pp. 339–54. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Day, S., E. Papataxiarchis and M. Stewart. 1999. Introduction: Consider the lilies of the field. *In* S. Day, E. Papataxiarchis and M. Stewart, eds., *Lilies of the field: Marginal people who live for the present*, pp. 1–24. Oxford: Westview Press.

de Haan, A. 1993. Migrant labour in Calcutta jute mills: Class, instability and control. *In* P. Robb, ed., *Dalit movements and the meanings of labour*, pp. 186–224. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1994. *Unsettled settlers: Migrant workers and industrial capitalism in Calcutta*. Hilversum: Verloren.

———. 1999. The *badli* system in industrial labour recruitment: Managers' and workers' strategies in Calcutta's jute industry. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 33, 1&2: 271–301.

Ferguson, J. 1999. *Expectations of modernity: Myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gardner, K. 1995. *Global migrants, local lives: Travel and transformation in rural Bangladesh*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gluckman, M. 1958. Foreword. *In* W. Watson, *Tribal cohesion in a money economy: A study of the Mambwe people of Zambia*, pp. v–xxiii. Manchester: University Press.

———. 1961. Anthropological problems arising from the African industrial revolution. *In* A.W. Southall, ed., *Social change in modern Africa*, pp. 67–82. London: Oxford University Press.

Grillo, R. 1999. An African railwayman is a railwayman: Or the subject of the subject of the subject. *In* J.R. Campbell and A. Rew, eds., *Identity and affect. Experiences of identity in a globalising world*, pp. 227–50. London: Pluto Press.

———. 2000. Review of J. Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity: Myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, 3: 554–55.

Holmström, M. 1976. *South Indian factory workers: Their life and their world*. Cambridge: University Press.

———. 1984. *Industry and inequality: The social anthropology of Indian labour*. Cambridge: University Press.

Joshi, C. 1999. Hope and despair: Textile workers in Kanpur in 1937–38 and the 1990s. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 33, 1&2: 171–203.

Kapadia, K. 1999. Gender ideologies and the formation of rural industrial classes in south India today. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 33, 1&2: 329–52.

MARX, K. 1961 [1867]. Preface to the first German edition. *Capital*, vol. 1. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.

MEHTA, V. 1967. *Portrait of India*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

MEILLASSOUX, C. 1981. *Maidens, meal and money: Capitalism and the domestic economy*. Cambridge: University Press.

OSELLA, F. and C. OSELLA. 2000. *Social mobility in Kerala: Modernity and identity in conflict*. London: Pluto Press.

PARRY, J.P. 1999a. Lords of labour: Working and shirking in Bhilai. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 33, 1&2: 107–40.

———. 1999b. Two cheers for reservation: The Satnamis and the steel plant. *In* R. Guha and J. Parry, eds., *Institutions and inequalities: Essays in honour of André Béteille*, pp. 128–69. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 2000. 'The crisis of corruption' and 'The idea of India': A worm's-eye view. *In* I. Pardo, ed., *The morals of legitimacy*, pp. 27–55. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

———. 2001. Ankalu's errant wife: Sex, marriage and industry in contemporary Chhattisgarh. *Modern Asian studies* 35, 4: 783–820.

———. n.d. Modernity and sacrifice: Discourses of development in a central Indian steel town. Paper presented at a workshop on 'Rural-urban relations and representations', University College, London, April 2000.

PIEKE, F.N. 1999. Introduction: Chinese migrations compared. *In* F.N. Pieke and H. Mallee, eds., *Internal and international migration: Chinese perspectives*, pp. 1–26. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press.

POCOCK, D. 1960. Sociologies: Urban and rural. *Contributions to Indian sociology* (old series) 4: 63–81.

SHARMA, U. 1987. Migration as a household process: Data from Himachal Pradesh. *Sociological bulletin* 36, 3: 61–79.

SKELDON, R. 1985. Migration in South Asia: An overview. *In* L.A. Kosinski and K.M. Elahi, eds., *Population redistribution and development in South Asia*, pp. 37–63. Boston: Reidel.

SRINIVASAN, N.R. 1984. *The history of Bhilai*. Bhilai: Public Relations Department, Bhilai Steel Plant.

STAFFORD, C. 1999. Separation, reunion and the Chinese attachment to place. *In* F.N. Pieke and H. Mallee, eds., *Internal and international migration: Chinese perspectives*, pp. 315–30. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press.

WEINER, M. 1978. *Sons of the soil: Migration and ethnic conflict in India*. Princeton: University Press.

WOLF, D. 1992. *Factory daughters: Gender, household dynamics, and rural industrialization in Java*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Toward a Global Science
Mining Civilizational Knowledge

Susantha Goonatilake

This study maps the depth and scope of the historical connections between Asia and Europe across the sciences, from mathematics to psychology and philosophy of science. . . . The outcome is a profoundly engaging work that confirms Susantha Goonatilake as one of the most creative and innovative scholars of science.

Jan Nederveen Pierterse, author of *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*

Susantha Goonatilake successfully steers the difficult course between the positivist defenders of science and the relativist critics. With astounding erudition, he demonstrates the substantial, multifaceted and continuing contributions of South Asian science to that of Europe. His convincing argument that similar claims have been made or can be made for other non-Western civilizations justifies his title Toward a Global Science.

Martin Benal, author of *Black Athena*

An insightful study of how some of the premodern scientific results and insights may serve us well in the modern world. . .highly recommended.

Choice, July/August 1999

240 x 160 mm ◆ 328 pages ◆ Hb ◆ 1999

Vistaar Publications
New Delhi

Expectations and rewards of modernity: Commitment and mobility among rural migrants in Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

Geert De Neve

This article presents a critique of a discourse, commonly found in anthropological and historical accounts, that stereotypes rural labour migrants as unreliable workers who are not yet fully committed to industrial work regimes and who keep prioritising rural responsibilities above industrial needs. Based on data collected in the garment industry of Tirupur, south India, it is shown that rural migrants can as well be conceived of by their urban employers as more committed and hardworking recruits than the so-called 'locals'. Employers' discourses of migrant workers are examined and four case histories of migrants are discussed to illustrate that labour commitment is not just the mechanical outcome of a long-standing familiarity with an industrial and modern life-style. Rather, the commitment of migrant workers has to be understood in relation to their expectations of and encounters with modernity, which for most migrants are shaped through experiences of socio-economic and spatial mobility. Commitment can be expected to be high where rewards are substantial. The article engages with modernity both as a discourse about the nature of industrial employment and life-styles, and as a set of expectations and achievements which comprise the experiences of modernity for those involved.

Geert De Neve is at the University of Sussex, School of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies, Falmer, Brighton, East Sussex, BNI 9SJ, UK.

Acknowledgements: The fieldwork on which this article is based was funded by an ESRC research grant (R000238024). An earlier version of this article was presented in a seminar on globalisation at the LSE. I am particularly grateful for comments on earlier versions of this article by Henrike Donner, Christopher Fuller, Katy Gardner, John Harriss, Filippo Osella, Jonathan P. Parry and an anonymous reader.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

I
Introduction

Scholars of modernity have recently pointed out the fallacies of viewing modernity as a singular structure or a homogeneous experience. While emphasising the multiplicity of 'modernities' in any region of the world, ethnographic accounts have begun to recognise the varied ways in which modernities—both as cultural discourses and as social practices—are locally imbued with multiple meanings and shaped through differential experiences (Ferguson 1999; Mills 1999a; Osella and Osella 2000; Rofel 1999).

However, most of these accounts of modernity share a remarkably similar and close engagement with the issue of mobility, both in terms of upward socio-economic movements and in terms of spatial movements across regions, countries and continents. In fact, on the basis of recent research on the issue, it can be argued that the prospects of mobility themselves constitute a major part of what modernity stands for in many parts of the world today. Thus, where can one better begin to study the expectations and promises of modernity than through the experienced processes of social mobility and regional migration which, for those involved, often contain the most tangible promises and rewards of the modernity they imagine? While the noteworthy contribution of Ferguson points to the inseparable alliance between the experiences of modernity and migration on the Zambian Copperbelt (1999: 38–81, 123–65), the ethnography of Osella and Osella reveals the intricate relationship between the Izhavas' encounters with modernity and their aspirations to social mobility in Kerala (2000: 1–37). At the core of such accounts of modernity lies a preoccupation with the nature of the transformations at stake and with the manner in which conflicts of sorts are negotiated and worked out in the process (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan, this volume; Mills 1999a, 1999b; Ong 1991). Mills for one has documented the contradictions and conflicts experienced in the lives of Thai women migrants to Bangkok, who are torn between being good daughters and becoming modern mothers (1999a: 127–70). This conflict of identity lies at the heart of what modernity has to offer to them and manifests itself precisely through these young women's experiences of labour migration from their villages to Bangkok. Modernity—however defined—increasingly reveals itself as a contradictory and ambiguous process of change that holds as many promises as riddles to be solved.

It is my aim to contribute to this line of enquiry by looking at one particular aspect of modernity in relation to migration and mobility: the discourses and practices that surround the issue of migrant workers' commitment and discipline in an urban industrial setting. The reason for this focus is twofold. First, the issue of commitment has been at the core of the employers' preoccupations with labour recruitment and the formation of an industrial labour force. Second, the extent of migrants' commitment and discipline in an urban industry has frequently been taken as the benchmark against which their overall familiarity with an urban, industrial and modern life-style (or industrial modernity) have been judged.[1] Or, particular versions of the 'traditional' and the 'modern' have been constructed around these notions of commitment and discipline, and rural migrant labourers are often stereotyped as either 'traditional' or 'modern' according to their attitude towards the industry in which they are employed.

In what follows I suggest that the 'commitment' of rural migrants to industrial employment does *not* just result from a gradual and teleological transition from village to town, from field to factory, and from traditional to modern work disciplines. Rural migrants' lack of commitment to urban work is *not* merely the corollary of a lack of long-term acquaintance with an industrial environment. Rather, I maintain that rural migrants can as well be conceived of by their urban employers as more committed, reliable and hard-working recruits compared to the so-called 'locals'. I will suggest, therefore, that commitment has to be understood as the outcome of *at least* three interrelated factors: first, the migrant workers' expectations of urban work and life, along with the scope they see for upward mobility through industrial work; second, the specific organisation of the urban industry and the extent to which it can fulfil at least some of the migrant workers' aspirations; and third, the extent to which the migrant workers succeed in locally constructing and mobilising the support of networks and patrons.

By pursuing this matter I want to question the analytical use of simple dichotomies such as tradition/modernity, rural/urban and agricultural/industrial by emphasising the ambiguous nature of modernity itself.

[1] I refer here in particular to the idea of 'industrial modernity', which can be defined as any conceptualisation of modernity that emerges alongside processes of industrial and capitalist transformation and that is closely related to the spatial move from field to factory. While this idea of modernity is regionally diverse, it tends to be closely associated with a notion of western-style modernity which followed in the wake of the Industrial Revolution (see also Ferguson 1999: 5).

Indeed, rural labour migrants to the Lancashire textile mills, the Zambian Copperbelt, or the Calcutta jute industry have invariably been described as uncommitted to the industrial setting, lacking industrial discipline and village-bound. Their 'rural', 'traditional' and 'backward' life-style has been particularly stressed as devoid of 'the modern' in its juxtaposition with an emerging 'urban' and 'progressive' attitude, which supposedly marked life and work in an industrial setting. This stereotyping of rural migrants has not only been the discourse of employers and administrators, but also of many ethnographers and historians (Ferguson 1999: 16). In what follows I will show in particular that the roots of commitment have to be found elsewhere. The commitment of migrants (or lack thereof) to an urban industry and employer has to be understood as a manifestation of the tension between hopes and realities, between dreams fulfilled and dreams forgone.[2]

First, I will focus on some recurring representations of labour migrants in the anthropological and historical literature, and of the 'problem' of commitment and discipline. Then, I will introduce my own ethnography of rural labour migrants to Tirupur, south India. A discussion of the employers' discourses of their workers will be followed by some case studies of rural migrants and their urban networks.

II
Migration, labour and commitment

Recently, Ferguson (1999) has addressed the narratives of migration and urbanisation in a thought-provoking monograph on urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt. In his revisionist critique of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute scholars, Ferguson addresses what he calls 'the myth of permanent urbanization' (ibid.: 41), which assumes a gradual transformation from short-term migration to permanent settlement on the Copperbelt. Instead, Ferguson demystifies this unidirectional picture by indicating the co-existence of a multitude of migration patterns at any point in time (ibid.: 38–81). Anthropologists extended similar unilinear assumptions into the domain of the 'cultural'. The 'tribesman' became

[2] I use the term commitment in a broad sense to refer to three distinct but related notions: first, commitment to urban and industrial life and work; second, commitment to a particular job and employer within the industry; and third, commitment as a normative concept that suggests reliability, trustworthiness and a 'modern' attitude to work and life, comparable to Ferguson's notion of a cosmopolitan cultural style (1999: 82–122).

opposed to the 'townsman' and their respective 'cultures' were captured in dualist terms such as primitive/civilised, tribal/urban, and low urban commitment/high urban commitment (ibid.: 86–93; see also Gluckman 1961; Mayer 1961). The Rhodes-Livingstone scholars' main preoccupation was to observe and even measure the extent of the workers' adaptation to an emerging 'industrial modernity', and thereby of their cultural transformation from tribesman to townsman, in the words of Gluckman (1961: 68–70; see also Mitchell 1966: 38–40). It was by and large agreed that the tribesman's adaptation to urban life and industry would necessarily be slow, gradual and clearly incomplete, that is, bearing some continuous marks of tribal origin and outlook. These assumptions were further extended to the labour market, and the vision predominated that local labour was highly skilled and more committed, while migrant labour was less skilled and showed a higher labour turnover (Mitchell 1961: 223–39). Their rural connection provided a major source of explanation.

Descriptions of rural-urban labour migration in India display a conspicuous similarity. What Ferguson has recently criticised as 'cultural dualism', that is, the conceptualisation of a sharp cultural difference (expressed in dress, speech, habits and customs) between the urban and the rural worlds, in fact recalls what Holmström, in his engaging review of the social anthropology of Indian labour, has termed a 'dual economy and society' (1984: 310–23). While Holmström's initial description of a sharp boundary between the organised and unorganised sectors (1976: 137) was later replaced by the image of a steep slope from modern industrial employment down to casual migrant labour and destitution (1984: 319), this revision does leave us with a strong sense of teleology and unilinear development. His metaphor of a slope does more than merely describe an ordering of the social and economic world. It not only suggests that each individual is struggling their way up a ladder, which is a gradual move from field to factory, from village to town and from temporary to permanent settlement and employment, but it also implies a transformation of Indian society as a whole from the bottom to the top of the slope. Could it be that Holmström, as much as his informants, were reproducing their belief in a 'myth of modernity', shaped by wishful thinking about industrial progress?

Milton Singer's preoccupation with the question of how people combine being modern and traditional in their own lives resonates with the Rhodes-Livingstone scholars' concern with the cultural transformation of migrants in town. In his theory of compartmentalisation Singer points out how Indians are able to compartmentalise their lives, 'following a

"modern" model in a ritually neutralized work sphere and a "traditional" one in their domestic and social life' (1971: 165). In fact, about thirty years before Ferguson, Singer had already introduced the concept of cultural styles and illustrated the co-existence of various cultural styles (modern and traditional) within a single cultural tradition. Observing Madras during the 1950s, Singer saw how innovations in dress, speech, medicine and science—initially recognised as 'European'—were gradually turned into cultural styles appropriated by 'modern' Indians (ibid.: 172–74). Many Indians, he explained, are proficient in distinct cultural styles and capable of skilfully moving between them according to social context. Singer's was an early step beyond the modern versus tradition dichotomy.

But there are different accounts. Breman has arguably provided us with the richest ethnography of labour migrants in south Gujarat, west India. He presents a map that includes the varied and multiple patterns of rural-rural and rural-urban migration, and documents the struggles and survival strategies of many rural migrants (1996: 225). It is in the discussion of seasonal labour migration in south Gujarat that Breman provides us with an interesting insight into the ideological use of the 'commitment problem' by factory employers. Yearly, thousands of seasonal labour migrants are recruited for sugar-cane cutting on the plains of south Gujarat and Breman asks why migrant labour is employed for this seasonal work instead of local labour, which is amply available. The answer, he suggests, can be found in the employers' discourse and practice of recruitment. The employers state that local labourers (the landless, low-caste Halpatis) are lazy, unreliable and careless; they are said to be wholly indifferent and uncommitted to the job. Breman observes that 'this image of a pathological syndrome—an unwillingness to work, immediate gratification of a limited set of needs and so on' is taken by the factory owners as a justification for their own unwillingness to employ them, and for their preference for outside labour (Breman 1994: 185–86). What the employers actually mean when emphasising the local workers' lack of discipline, is that the latter—unlike the migrant workers—are not prepared to work for the paltry wages, that it is not possible to make unlimited demands on them, and that they cannot be disposed of easily (ibid.: 182–88). In short, what is at stake is not so much the indifference of the local Halpatis, but the lack of commitment of 'those who deny them access to work' (ibid.: 187). While the lack of commitment is always presented as a working class problem and while the problems are invariably *with* labour, the commitment of employers has seldom been seriously

considered, let alone conceived of as problematic (Breman 1999: 7).[3] It is precisely this point which I take on board below: migrants' commitment is largely determined by their expectations of urban employers and industrial employment, and by the extent to which they judge that the industry will be able to fulfil the promises it holds.

As early as 1960, M.D. Morris, discussing the emergence of an industrial labour force in Bombay, observed that migrants were not less committed or disciplined due to whatever 'cultural' characteristics, as was suggested by much of the literature at the time,[4] but were kept at bay by the industry itself whose needs often preferred to keep workers only on a temporary and flexible basis (Morris 1965: 6; 1960: 173–78). Similarly, a high labour turnover could not be attributed merely to the rural connections maintained by the mill-hands, but was predominantly shaped by other factors, including the seasonal demand for textile products, the variable wage differentials, the shifting hours and conditions of work, and the recurrent incidence of diseases (1960: 175–82).

Morris's forthright rejection of the orthodox thesis that rural attachments, kin-cum-caste ties and pre-industrial values prevent the rural migrant's full commitment to urban employment and life becomes particularly meaningful in the light of the unrepentant reproduction of this orthodoxy in more recent literature. Chakrabarty, for instance, has suggested that migrant jute mill workers related to the factory and its machinery through a 'rural'—read 'primitive'—outlook (1989: 89), that they had *not yet* acquired the industrial mind which long-term familiarity with industrial work is supposed to breed, and that 'the jute worker in Calcutta always conducted himself ... only as a link, as a member of a community defined, somewhat ambiguously, by the links of religion, language, habitat, and so on' (ibid.: 213). The workers' 'culture' is thus equated with probably the most widespread orientalist stereotypes of Indian 'tradition', 'hierarchy' and 'communities', and is taken as the fundamental reason for a lack of commitment and solidarity on the shop-floor. De Haan has argued in a similar vein that the instability of the Calcutta labour force was largely due to the annual visits of the workers to their villages and their shifts to other mills on return (1994: 82–90). It is suggested that the workers' yearly return was shaped by marriage seasons and obligations of various sorts at home, implying that labourers were less committed to

[3] For a similar discussion of the company's commitment to workers in five factories in Poona, Maharashtra, in the late 1950s, see Lambert (1963: 94–104).

[4] See for example, Lambert (1963), Moore and Feldman (1960), Niehoff (1959), Ornati (1955) and Shiva Rao (1939).

urban, industrial work due to their so-called 'primordial loyalties' and 'rural attachments'. This would be reflected in the 'strong wish on the part of the migrants to remain bound to their places of origin' (ibid.: 90). Ever present is the assumption that long-term residence in the city would ultimately eradicate these rural attitudes and replace them with a long-term urban commitment.[5]

My ethnography aims at situating migrant workers' commitment within its specific context of job opportunities, prospects of upward mobility and industrial networking. I reiterate the earlier argument of Morris, which leaves open the possibility of full labour commitment, at any stage of migration or employment, and the suggestion by Breman that 'commitment' can be used by employers (and others) to veil their own unwillingness or incapability to deal with labour. The extent to which migrants can realise the industrial opportunities in their own lives largely depends on their success in constructing networks of support and in mobilising the patronage of those upon whom they depend in town. It is here also that the ambiguity of modernity becomes most tangible: for some migrants the promises of modernity become a reality, while others merely harvest disappointment.

III
Tirupur town and the knitwear industry

Situated about 50 km to the east of Coimbatore city in Tamil Nadu, Tirupur has for at least the last thirty years been known across south India as a 'boom town'.[6] From a relatively small town, famous for its ginning mills in a cotton producing area, Tirupur has metamorphosed over the last decades into a modern exporting centre for knitwear manufacturing. Today, production is organised through a decentralised network

[5] Similar assumptions about a lack of labour commitment and discipline have been reproduced by Ong (1987), and subjected to criticism by Parry (1999: 107–40) and Breman (1999: 7–12). For earlier critiques of the assumed break between rural and industrial regimes, see Lambert (1963: 15–17, 58–104) and Sheth (1968: 67–92, 174–204).

[6] Fieldwork was carried out in Tirupur over a period of nearly five months, as part of a year's fieldwork in Tamil Nadu from October 1999 till September 2000. In-depth interviews were conducted with the owners of about forty units of various size and activity, with labour contractors and foremen, and with workers. Union leaders and local manufacturing associations were also contacted. A short workers' survey was conducted in a number of printing, dyeing, knitting and stitching units.

of firms of various size, linking together knitting units, garment units (stitching), dyeing and bleaching factories, printing workshops, etc. While in 1942 there were thirty-four knitwear factories in Tirupur, this number had risen to about 200 units in 1961 and to nearly 4,000 units in 2000 (Tirupur Exporters' Association 2000).[7] As a result of this phenomenal growth of the industry, Tirupur soon became known throughout south India as a place 'where anyone can make it'. Nevertheless, it is commonly admitted that there have been as many failures as successes in Tirupur, and many firms have been unable to face increasing competition over time.

Given the explosive growth of the knitwear industry in Tirupur from the 1960s onwards, the town has attracted migrant workers from ever increasing distances. Three major but overlapping migration phases can be distinguished. A first phase, covering the 1950s to the 1970s, consisted of the influx of rural migrants from nearby villages. Many of them belonged to the locally dominant caste of Gounders and, while some owned agricultural land, the decreasing returns of agriculture gradually made labourers and cultivators turn to industrial work. They acquired different skills within the industry and became jobworkers, manufacturers and later exporters. They were usually young, male and enjoyed kin and caste support in the Tirupur area (Chari 2000a: 133–58). The second migration wave coincided with the export boom from the late 1970s till the early 1990s. Increased demand for Tirupur products abroad resulted in an urgent need for extra mill-hands. During this phase, Tirupur became widely known as a place where jobs were plentifully available and opportunities many. Migrants began to flow in from further afield, and especially from the poorer agricultural districts in the south, such as Tirunelveli and Tanjavur. The migrants were young, male, from rural backgrounds, and belonged to a variety of castes. They were mainly employed in the less attractive, least skilled and lowest paid dyeing, printing and processing workshops. Nevertheless, since then many of them have also 'made it' in Tirupur, and it is predominantly this group of migrants that I focus on here.

The final migration phase has included women workers. They began to be employed in larger numbers in the 1980s and especially from the mid-1990s onwards. They either came from different parts of Tamil Nadu, following their husbands, sons or brothers who had already migrated, or

[7] In 1999, a value of Rs 3,017 crores ($750 million) was exported from Tirupur (TEA 2000).

as young, unmarried women from Kerala. While today they are found in different sectors of the industry, they are primarily employed as 'checkers' and 'packers' in the stitching units, and more recently also as power-table tailors. While a discussion of their position within the industry falls beyond the scope of this article, two things have to be stated. First, these women migrant workers have not been able to enjoy the 'better' jobs within the industry; and second, they have had no scope for upward mobility. The opportunities for wider skill acquisition, the chances of promotion to contractor, supervisor, or manager, and the prospects of upward mobility through the establishment of independent units have by and large been the exclusive privileges of men. In many ways, the women migrants form an altogether different class of workers than their male counterparts: they work under different conditions and have radically different prospects within the industry (Chari 2000a: 335–55; Kapadia 1999).

As a result of its industrial success, Tirupur received the attention of scholars primarily interested in the development of industrial 'clusters' or 'districts' (Bhattacharya 1999; Swaminathan and Jayaranjan 1999), in agriculture-industry linkages (Chari 2000a; 2000b), and in small-scale industry networks (Cawthorne 1990, 1995). While these studies enhance our insight into the structural organisation of the industry, most of them hint only vaguely at how the opportunities offered by the industry affect the migrant workers' expectations, their hopes of attaining upward mobility, and ultimately their co-operation within the industry and their commitment to urban work and life. While these authors have stressed the centrality of 'networking' as the main principle of business organisation and accumulation in Tirupur (Cawthorne 1990: 182; Swaminathan and Jeyaranjan 1999: 118), they provide little detail about the actual dynamics of partnerships, job-work linkages, co-operation and upward mobility in the industry.

Sharad Chari, however, has described in more detail how many of the current manufacturers and exporters, belonging to the locally dominant caste of Vellalar Gounders, are ex-workers who made the transition from a modest agricultural background to successful industrial entrepreneurship through 'hard work' (*uzhaippu*) and various forms of 'support' (Chari 2000b: 590–96). While Chari's question of how the Gounders came to dominate the knitwear industry is certainly relevant, I would like to rephrase the question and ask how, given the local dominance of Gounders (both numerically and in terms of power), so many workers from other communities and from more distant backgrounds have also

been able to work their way up in the industry. My focus, therefore, is on the migrants to Tirupur, who belong to a variety of regional, caste and class backgrounds, and on how they too were attracted by the promises of Tirupur and succeeded in mobilising networks of support and co-operation. Before recounting a few personal testimonies of migrant workers' aspirations, struggles and mobility, let me first turn to some of the employers' discourses about migrant workers and their commitment.

IV
Employer discourses on migrants and their commitment

Employers are unanimous about the fact that there is no 'labour problem' in Tirupur today. This struck me at first, as I had been accustomed to the incessant complaints of employers in the power-looms of Kumarapalayam and the handlooms of Bhavani, hardly 50 km away from Tirupur, about the 'problems' of managing and disciplining labour (De Neve 1999a; 1999b). In Tirupur, however, employers told me that they had good relationships with their workers. One union leader said that relationships between employers and workers in the industry were *parasparam*, literally 'thick', or 'with mutual understanding'. Workers are said to be very 'co-operative' and the English phrase 'close understanding' is frequently used about their relationship with their employers. Union leaders argue that it is precisely this close relationship between workers and employers which explains why the unions have lost the co-operation of the workers in contemporary Tirupur. Furthermore, the labourers are said to be 'hard-working' (*uzhaipputhal*) and committed to the job.

This notion of commitment is expressed in various ways. Exporters and jobworkers observe that their hired workers have realised the need for regular and hard work during the knitwear season, and have understood that they cannot leave for their village without making interim arrangements. As the owner of a small garment unit put it: 'they [the workers] know that if they don't work hard and don't do "overtime" to finish an export order in time, the order will be rejected and they will get no payment; they know that there is a lot of competition and that times are tough for the owners also.' 'Trust' (*nambikkai*) is also invoked as a central aspect of the relationship between workers and employers. Kannan, the owner of a garment unit, says that he has a good and close relationship with his workers: 'The workers won't cheat us; they won't even take a pair of scissors. They know that time and quality are important

for exports.' Indeed, the workers seem to have internalised the need for hard work in the face of the particular requirements of the industry (high quality standards, sudden orders, tight deadlines, etc.). On the shop-floor, employers from different backgrounds frequently invoke the idiom of '*uzhaippu*' (toil, hard work) to explain to their workers that it is through 'toil' that they came up in the first place and that it is only through 'toil' that the workers can expect to come up as well. *Uzhaippu* acts as a powerful ideological tool, called upon by the employers to instil discipline in the workers and to gain their loyalty in an industry where control over manual labour is crucial to industrial success (Chari 2000a).

This image of hard work and job commitment is further reinforced when employers talk about migrant workers, usually referred to as 'those from the south' or 'the outsiders'. The owner of a large printing factory said that 'the locals will shift from factory to factory; when they are not happy with the work, they will simply shift to another place, but those from the south will stick to their employer.' Today, the largest number of migrant workers are employed in the dyeing, screen printing and knitting factories. These are the industries where the 'locals' are often unwilling to work, where skill is limited and easily acquired, and where a large supply of migrant labour allows owners to exploit a cheap labour force. When the employers dwell on the commitment and reliability of their workers it is usually in the following terms:

> The locals as well as the 'outsiders' can be committed to the work. But those from the south will usually stay for longer and they won't go back to the south very often. But the locals are much more casual; they often leave the job for other work, they shift to other factories or attend irregularly. They are not dependent on the employer for work. (Krishnan, knitting unit foreman)

> If water is available, the tailors from the south will go to their villages for one or two weeks to work in the fields, and then they return to Tirupur. During their absence, I will get workers from nearby factories where they have less orders, or my workers themselves will bring their friends to replace them while they are gone. If orders have to be finished urgently, I will not let them go. But as there is a good understanding with the workers, they themselves will not ask for leave during peak periods, and they will not leave all at the same time, but arrange to leave one after the other. (Senthil, garment factory owner)

> I provide free quarters and subsidised meals for the workers and I brought workers from outside Tirupur to work in my factory, which I built outside Tirupur. I recruited them in my native place in Vellore and trained them myself here in the factory. Now they operate the knitting machines very well, even though they had never seen such a machine before they came here. I keep my workers in the quarters inside the compound .... The Tirupur work culture is bad, and my workers have no contact with the Tirupur workers. (Sivakumar, knitting unit owner, just outside Tirupur)

When reflecting on their workers, the employers systematically contrast the 'locals' with 'those from the south', and emphasise how the latter are in many ways the more committed and reliable labourers. The picture of 'good relationships', therefore, seems to apply first and foremost to the migrant workers. But what are the explanations given by the employers for the migrant workers' higher levels of commitment to their jobs and their employers?

Contrary to what has often been reported about migrants' rural attachments, migrant workers in Tirupur do not constantly move back and forth between town and home, nor are they perceived by their employers to be prioritising rural needs above industrial responsibilities. From a short survey of migrant workers, it did indeed appear that most of them go home only every three to four months, and usually stay away for a maximum of one or two weeks. But there is more to account for their commitment. Several owners explained to me that 'those from the south' are more dependent on them than local workers. The latter are embedded in local job and neighbourhood networks which offer them a wider range of alternatives, not in the least because they are usually better skilled. The Tirupurians are mainly employed in the highly skilled and best paid cutting and stitching sections and often operate as labour contractors and foremen (Chari 2000a: 150–69). Whenever they are unhappy with their employer, they leave him as they can easily be introduced elsewhere through a friend, neighbour or fellow caste member. Furthermore, because they are highly skilled, often in the different processes of garment production, the local workers are also said to have a greater capacity than the migrants to quickly start a business of their own.

Lack of skill and local contacts pushes the migrant workers into the least attractive jobs and makes them particularly dependent on the employer who recruits them on their arrival in town. While to some extent

this dependency might by voluntary, it is also enforced by the employers, who eagerly present themselves as the 'patrons' of their workers. They emphasise that they provide quarters, a canteen, subsidised food and other facilities for 'those from the south', but few add that this is one of the crucial ways in which they try to control and immobilise them. As is clear from the account of Sivakumar above, many dyeing and knitting units have been set up outside the centre of Tirupur where the employers try hard to keep their workers inside the factory compound and especially away from what they call the 'bad Tirupur culture'. The reason for recent factory relocations is invariably the aim to control a mainly migrant workforce by keeping them within the space of the factory and outside the influence of better skilled, higher paid and unionised workers.

Commitment and reliability of workers is often judged by the employers in terms of union involvement. Locals have been involved more actively in unions over the last decades, and the early 1980s were particularly marked by fierce union activity, with major strikes in 1981 and 1984 (Cawthorne 1990: 209–16; Chari 2000a: 228–43, 340–44). Today, employers repeat that in Tirupur there is no need for the workers to join a union: 'we all have open and direct relationships with our workers and any problem can be settled directly with us.' The owners argue that they *know* what hard work (*uzhaippu*) is because they themselves have come up through hard work, and that they *understand* the needs of the workers because they themselves were workers before. Most owners opt for dealing personally with labour problems and settling the matter on the shop-floor itself. They constantly refer to the shared experience of *uzhaippu* to discipline their workforce on the shop-floor. Ganapathy, a now retired Communist Party of India (CPI) union leader, confirmed that the workers from the south strongly depend on their employers, and argued that it is precisely this patron-client relationship which prevents them from joining the unions. Indeed, patronage networks are most vibrant between local owners and migrant workers, and it is this relationship that is often described as *parasparam*, or 'thick, with mutual understanding'. While hard work and thrift are invoked by their employers as preconditions for the migrant worker's upward mobility, the prospects of mobility are rarely realised without the simultaneous support of 'contacts', 'networks' and 'patronage'.

In short, the employers themselves are central to the production of 'commitment' and 'loyalty', partly by making the workers dependent on them and by retaining tight control, but partly also by providing the new and usually young migrants with the longer term prospects of job-work,

partnerships or managerial positions. Put differently, the migrant workers' willingness to take on a subordinate and committed attitude is closely tied to the particular opportunities this behaviour might yield for them in the long run. Holding on to prospects is one thing, but mobilising the resources to fulfil them is quite another. It is to these issues that I now turn.

V
Aspirations, networks and mobility

I will present four case histories of migrant workers who—to varying degrees—have been successful in the Tirupur knitwear industry, and look into the networks, partnerships and patronage that made their upward mobility possible. The case studies aim at substantiating the argument that labour commitment is not a feature of the gradual transformation of rural migrants into modern urban settlers, but the outcome of workers' aspirations and prospects in town, of the concrete opportunities offered to them by the particular organisation of the industry, and of their ability to mobilise the support of networks and patrons.

Upward mobility through networking: Pandian and his friends

Pandian (31) is a busy man, currently running a small screen-printing workshop in Kongu Nagar, in the north of Tirupur. He employs ten to fifteen workers, according to season, but often helps out in the workshop himself. I met Pandian first in the office attached to Ravi's workshop. Pandian's workshop was under repair and so he was using two of the three printing tables leased by Ravi, who at that time did not have many orders himself. I gradually discovered that Pandian and Ravi (a local Naidu) are close friends, and that Ravi's office is a central meeting point for a number of small jobworkers who are interrelated in a close network of partnerships, friendships and mutual support. It was in this office, at the end of the shift around 9.30 PM, that Pandian told me how he came to Tirupur.

His native place is a tiny village near Madurai, where his father had some land and livestock, and he belongs to the community of Naickers. Pandian studied up to the 10th standard and his first job, which consisted of selling the milk of their ten cows, was followed by a series of other sales jobs in the market of Madurai. Although most people in his village

hold on to some land, a lack of water made cultivation increasingly unrewarding and many villagers had already begun to migrate to Tirupur in the 1980s. In 1991 Pandian's younger brother left for Tirupur where he worked in a screen-printing workshop and stayed with some relatives who had moved there earlier. This initial link with relatives in Tirupur facilitated his search for a job in town. As soon as Pandian came to know that there were plenty of opportunities 'to start an own business' in Tirupur, he joined his younger brother, together with another brother and his mother. Their mother joined to cook for them in the room they rented, while his father stayed back at home to look after the land. For six months Pandian worked as a helper and for eighteen months as a printer. From the very first day he entered the industry, Pandian knew he wanted to start 'on his own', and by the end of 1994 had saved enough money together with his brothers to buy a 14 feet long printing table and start a screen-printing unit.

In late 1995, Pandian purchased a 52 feet long table in partnership with three local garment factory owners, two Gounders and one Mudaliyar. These were local manufacturers for whom he had been doing printing work on his first table. They wanted to expand from knitting into printing, but lacked the skill and the time to run a printing unit themselves. Pandian proudly adds that they knew his character and knew he was trustworthy (*nambikkai irukku*), and that is why they asked him to join them in a partnership. For Pandian it was an opportunity to expand without having to raise much money. However, the three owners were not very satisfied with the profits of the unit and after nine months the partnership broke up. At that point, Pandian was back to square one and for three months he worked again as a *kuli* (wage labourer). By the end of 1996, he entered a new partnership with a Gounder garment unit owner from Tirupur. Pandian again became the working partner, managing workshop production on a day-to-day basis. For three months the production went well, but then his partner left and Pandian continued on his own for one and a half years. When the lease expired, in 1998, he shifted to another work shed where he continued with two tables of 100 feet each.

Throughout Pandian enjoyed the support of his two younger brothers, one of whom has gone back to the village, while the other helps him in the workshop. In 1998, his father and his elder sister with her husband moved to Tirupur to join them in the factory. During the last few years they did very well, and in 1999, they built a spacious bungalow in which they now all jointly live. Pandian uses the Tamil saying that 'when you

live with your family, you can earn crores'. Although he works day and night himself, he recognises that the support of his family has been a great help, not only to settle in Tirupur but also to allow accumulation for investment in a printing unit. While the importance of links with one's own kin and friends at home has been extensively discussed in the literature on migration (Breman 1985, 1994, 1996; Chakrabarty 1989; Chandavarkar 1994; de Haan 1994; Sen 1999), the necessity for migrants to build up a network of support in the town itself has been far less documented. Pandian, however, emphasises that both the formal partnerships and the informal friendships cultivated in Tirupur itself proved invaluable to his mobility. The partnerships he entered into with local manufacturers allowed him to expand, to learn about the trade and to develop new contacts and skills.

But the friendships which he cultivated in Kongu Nagar itself were equally—if not more—important to develop within the industry and to bridge difficult periods. Currently, for example, the use of Ravi's tables allows Pandian to continue production while his own workshop is being repaired. And, on a more regular basis, Pandian and Ravi loan each other a few thousand rupees whenever chemicals have to be bought or wages paid. Ravi's story is not very different from that of Pandian: he also started as a helper in a printing unit and later set up a partnership with a friend, Kumar, who is a local Gounder and garment factory owner. Another friend in this network of small workshops is Siva, a local Naicker, who is currently a sleeping partner in an export garment partnership (i.e., he only contributed money). Through him, however, printing jobwork is passed on to Pandian and Ravi. In the summer of 2000, Siva was rebuilding a shed and planned to get his own printing unit going before long. All manufacturers and jobworkers I interviewed attach great importance to these tight networks of close friends and view this as the most important feature of business operation in Tirupur. As an established exporter put it: 'what is special about this place is that friendships are very close and supportive, and that friends become like relatives; they will be close with one's entire family, visit each other at home and mingle with each other's relatives as if they were one's own'. Often it is said that while 50 per cent of the partnerships in Tirupur are among relatives, 50 per cent are among friends, and the latter are often preferred as business partners above close kin.

There are various ways in which such friendships arise. Some have their roots in the village from where migrants originate or in shared caste membership, but most friends stated that they came to know each other

in Tirupur itself. While some met in school or on a course they took, most often they became friends by working in the same factory or living in the same neighbourhood, of which Kongu Nagar is one example. While, as Chari (2000a: 327–64) has argued, there is undoubtedly a strong Gounder dominance in Tirupur, based on the interface of kin and friendship ties among the members of this caste, caste is not the major axis around which friendships are formed among migrant workers. Rather, networks of friends, like that of Pandian, which include Naickers, Naidus, Gounders and locals as well as other migrants, are typical of Tirupur social relationships rather than exceptional.

To understand the nature of these friendships we have to look at the various forms of sharing and reciprocity that consolidate these relationships. First, friends are men who share the skills, experience and resources available to them (labour, materials, technology, etc.). If Pandian has an urgent order to finish, Ravi will send a few of his workers to help him out, while Ravi in turn borrows Pandian's printing tables whenever he has extra work. Moreover, their shared experience of 'toiling' as hired hands during the earlier stages of their life in Tirupur is openly recognised among friends as a basis of 'mutual understanding'. As a result, these friendships are often the preferred basis for a partnership, even where jobworkers such as Pandian have their own kin with whom they also co-operate. Second, these friendships are further cultivated by shared practices that reproduce a sense of 'masculinity and fraternity' on a day-to-day basis (Chari 2000a: 357). The way leisure time is spent among friends is one example. Once a working day is over and the labourers have gone home, Pandian and his friends gather in one of their work sheds where they share food, drinks and cigarettes. They all contribute to the expenses or treat each other in turn depending on who has money at hand. Membership in drinking groups closely overlaps with membership in partnerships or networks of co-operation. It is in these gatherings that jokes are made, gossip is exchanged and deals are forged among close friends. Kumar, for example, explained that they would never drink alcohol with any person unless they knew him very well and a sense of trust existed. Drinking alcohol is done with utmost secrecy and, therefore, exclusively among those who feel they can trust each other.

Finally, friends also cultivate what can be called kin-like relationships which extend beyond their exclusively male gatherings and which buttress their friendships with wider social recognition and acceptance. Essentially, work friends also become family friends and freely mingle with each other's relatives. Ravi explained this most clearly:

> I am a Naidu and Kumar is a Naicker, so as we are of similar castes, I can take him home and my family can easily accept him. He knows everyone in my house and is a family friend. Our partners will always be known to everyone in the family and it is therefore easier to develop a friendship with someone from a similar caste than with someone from a Scheduled Caste [SC]. I would not be able to take the latter home and my mother would not accept him. Friendships are easier among members of equal castes, such as Gounders, Naidus, Naickers, Mudaliyars and Chettiyars, as we have very similar 'ways of doing things' or 'customs' (*pazhakam vazhakam, kazhacharam*). When they invite us for a wedding, we can easily attend it, but with SC people it would be difficult to go to their houses or attend their family functions.

Ravi's account reveals two interesting issues. First, the importance of wider family involvement and acceptance. Friends and partners are persons with whom one makes exchanges of various sorts, and who in many ways become *like* close relatives. Rather than trying to keep them separate from one's own kin, constant efforts are made to draw them into one's family sphere. The creation of kin-like relationships is an effective tool to consolidate business relationships, and especially so among those who are not related as 'real' kin. Second, while friendship networks are usually very mixed caste-wise, caste nevertheless proves to be a central marker of the boundaries within which friendships are possible in the first place. Most of the groups of friends I came across consisted of what are locally referred to as middle ranging castes, entirely excluding members of SC and other low ranking communities. Given the importance of friendship-based networks within the sector, it need not surprise us that even within this thriving industry of Tirupur, the Harijans remain once again excluded from one of the most crucial assets for upward mobility: networked co-operation and mutual support among close friends backed up by fictive kin relationships. Herein lies a crucial ambiguity of modernity's promises.

While friendship-based partnerships are commonly recognised among the Tirupur manufacturers as a crucial means for industrial expansion and mobility, it leaves no doubt that these friendships are of particular importance to the migrants in town. Young, male migrants usually arrive in town empty-handed, with no or limited capital, few industrial skills and meagre support networks. Even if they have a link that initially got them a job in Tirupur, they stand little chance of working their way up without a more extensive and durable network of support. And such networks are cultivated in town through friendships and reciprocal

relationships that are frequently imbued with attributes of fictive kinship. Similarly emphasising the close friendships among factory workers in Bangkok who migrated from different parts of the country, Mills points to the significance of organised group excursions in the consolidation of such locality-based relationships among migrants in the city. Indeed, she writes, 'organized excursions engage participants in modes of expression and experience that extend beyond the particular economic and emotional ties of migrant workers to their families of origin' (Mills 1999b: 31). Furthermore, Helen Lambert has recently argued that caste has been over-emphasised as the predominant marker of identity in India, to the detriment of locality-specific forms of social identity (1996: 101). Her ethnography from rural Rajasthan points to the strategic importance of fictive and adoptive kin relationships cultivated among rural women who migrated to their conjugal village on marriage (1996; 2000). These ties of fictive kinship, which are often constructed across castes and between families otherwise unrelated, are highly valued by rural women and are central to their personal and social identity in their in-laws' village (1996: 106–18). In the same vein, the friendships actively constructed among migrant workers in Tirupur are of a similar, locality-specific nature and constitute a central part of the migrants' social and economic identity in town. Stretching beyond the boundaries of caste and kinship, they are nevertheless of a strategic significance to the migrants' survival and their mobility within the industry.

As a hard-working man, Pandian has been highly committed to the printing industry from the first day he came to Tirupur. He took every partnership seriously, as they allowed him to come up in an industry where 'support' is crucial. While his family provided helpful hands, he invested time and energy in cultivating a close network of friends that proved vital for his initial survival and mobility in the longer run.

Mobility through dependency and patronage: The families of Suresh and Sakthi

The family histories of Suresh (24) and Sakthi (30) are closely intertwined, and so are their businesses. While their family backgrounds are very different, their development has been remarkably interconnected. Suresh is one of twins, born in Andipalayam, just outside Tirupur. Belonging to the local community of Gounders, his father, Ravichandran Gounder (59), started to work at the age of thirteen as a helper to a tailor.

Soon, he shifted to a printing factory where he worked for six years and in the early 1960s started on his own with one printing table. Soon, however, Ravichandran Gounder became one of the leading screen-printers in Tirupur and it was in 1996 that his twin sons, Suresh and Ramesh, joined him in the company after having finished their degrees in Coimbatore. Ravichandran Gounder explains that his development was only possible because of the co-operation of workers and partners, or as he puts it: 'we can only grow when we allow others to grow as well'. In 1985, he set up a dyeing unit (Venus Dyes) in partnership with a friend who had been a work-mate of his in the 1950s. This partnership lasted until 1998, when Ravichandran Gounder decided to continue the dyeing unit on his own and appointed a manager to run it.

This manager is Sakthi, and it is here that the stories of the two families converge. It was Sakthi's *mama* (maternal uncle), Shanmugam, who first came to Tirupur in 1974 from their native village in Tirunelveli district (southern Tamil Nadu). Belonging to the Pillaimar community, they were traditionally employed as accountants in the village, but they owned no land. Shanmugam came to Tirupur where he began to work as an accountant for Ravichandran Gounder. Soon the two men became close friends and Shanmugam was held in high esteem by Ravichandran Gounder as a hard-working, meticulous and loyal employee. Their families became very close, and Ravichandran Gounder and his twin sons soon began to join Shanmugam on his annual visit to his village in Tirunelveli, where they spent their holidays together. Often, Ravichandran Gounder would even leave the twins with Shanmugam, who would then bring them back on his return to Tirupur. Strong friendships linked the families and when Ravichandran Gounder started a garment unit called Busy Exports in 1989, Shanmugam was invited to join as a working partner. He now gets a salary and a 25 per cent share of the profits: a straightforward example of what is called a *kashtakkoottu* arrangement, whereby an ex-worker is turned into a partner in a joint venture[8] (Swaminathan and Jeyaranjan 1999: 113). In 1989, Sakthi joined his uncle in Tirupur, where he started to work in Ravichandran's company as a mechanic, while in 1995 he became the manager of a new branch of the company, Venus Hardwares.

[8] Swaminathan and Jeyaranjan comment that 'the (inherently) dynamic institution of *kashtakkoottu* has over a period of time enabled the simultaneous growth in entrepreneurship and in the mobility of labour, precisely because this arrangement enabled the coming together of persons with skill (but insufficient, or no financial resources) and those with financial resources (but little or no skill)' (1999: 113).

In 1998, he was finally made manager of the Venus Dyeing unit. In the meanwhile, several other relatives of Sakthi had joined the company and were given various managing positions by the owner. By the mid-1990s many of Sakthi's family members had migrated to Tirupur where they are currently employed in various branches of the textile industry and building permanent residences as they settle down.

Sakthi explains that people from the south cannot start their own business in Tirupur without the support of some local people in the industry—by 'locals' he refers to the established community of Gounders. Nevertheless, as Sakthi explains, like his own family, many migrants from outside Tirupur did manage to start a knitwear business in partnerships with local manufacturers for whom they had been working for a long time and who trusted them. The locals needed them and their skills to expand in new lines or to run particular units, especially when their own family labour was inadequate. As Ravichandran Gounder had no brothers, he had to rely on others to expand his company and to manage new units. For Sakthi and his uncles, the management positions and partnerships they were given were invaluable opportunities that allowed them to establish themselves. They are now permanently settled in Tirupur, and Sakthi was recently given financial support to build a house and provided with a motorbike by Ravichandran. The co-operation of Sakthi's family with Ravichandran's was not an expression of mere dependency, however, as they in turn benefited from Ravichandran's patronage. Their co-operation reflected their expectations of social and economic mobility, and their belief that collaboration with 'locals' was the only way to realise their own aspirations. The fact that it allowed the upward mobility of Sakthi's family itself is most clearly reflected in the independent establishment in 1996 by Sakthi and his relatives of their own garment company, RGS Apparels, in Tirupur. Sakthi proudly says that this unit is 'entirely run by Tirunelveli people'!

Mobility within the company: Muthu, the 'Singer' contractor

A different story is that of Muthu (27), who is currently employed as 'a Singer contractor' in a medium-size garment factory. Born in a village in Theni district, Muthu belongs to the Thevar community and his father was working as an agricultural, landless *kuli* (wage labourer). He studied up to 5th standard and at the age of thirteen he got a job in the village tailor shop, where he learned to tailor on a manually operated stitching machine, which is locally referred to as 'a Singer'. It was not until the

age of twenty one that he decided to come to Tirupur, following friends who had migrated earlier. Muthu did not deny that his aim of coming to Tirupur was to earn and save money. Like many tailors who lack sufficient work and income in their native place, Muthu imagined Tirupur as the promised land, where money would be easy to make. Initially, he worked for a few months in a tailor shop and lived in a rented room with two friends from his home village, and later he started to work as a 'Singer tailor' on a contract basis for different exporting companies.

Finally, Muthu shifted to Balaji Textiles, where after two months of work he was asked by the owner to 'take a contract', that is, to start as a labour contractor. A labour contractor is given a fixed amount of money to produce a particular order for which he is entirely responsible. The previous contractor was drinking a lot and was dismissed by the owner who, needing a contractor urgently, gave Muthu the opportunity to prove himself. Muthu admits that he was lucky, but that this is also the way in which one usually becomes a contractor: an owner gets an urgent order, has no labour contractor and as a result asks one of his best workers to 'take their first contract'. As Muthu completed his first order successfully, he was given more contracts and thus stayed on in the same factory. He says there is no reason for him to shift to other companies as the current owner provides him with regular work.

Muthu seems satisfied with the Rs 5,000 he earns monthly and openly discussed his savings plan. He has no brothers and the money he saved so far has been spent on the wedding of his sister back home. What he is earning now will be spent on his own wedding, and then he plans to start savings for his own shop. His aim is ultimately to go back to his village and start his own tailor shop. While Muthu is at the moment highly committed to his work and his current employer, this clearly does not imply that he also plans to establish himself permanently in Tirupur. However, as he has already been working in Tirupur for eight years now, it remains to be seen whether he will ever exchange his lucrative job, especially now as a contractor, in Tirupur for a small and likely less rewarding tailor shop in Theni district. After all, when he came to Tirupur, it was from that world of limited opportunity that he wanted to escape in the first place. As an only son, however, Muthu's ultimate choice will depend on his ability to negotiate the tensions between family demands to return home and Tirupur's promising outlook and freedom. Like many other migrants to Tirupur, his initial plan of spending a few years in the town and then returning home with a good amount of savings might well be replaced by a more permanent settlement in Tirupur.

When networks fail to deliver: Shame and reputation

However, while Tirupur is often presented to the outsider—both the potential migrant and the researcher—as a place 'where anyone can make it', not all migrant workers have been equally successful in benefiting from the opportunities offered by the knitwear industry. Many migrants saw their expectations of 'earning a quick buck' or 'starting their own business' shattered once they experienced the realities of Tirupur, not least its cut-throat competition. Some lost hope when partnerships broke down or orders fell through, while others grew increasingly disheartened after being cheated or let down by people they trusted. Nor did all of them enjoy the same support of friends, family or patron-employers as did Pandian, Sakthi and Muthu. As a result, some carry on after failed attempts, often as wage labourers but with the hope that one day they will be able to join the ranks of jobworkers again, while others have no option other than to return home.

But returning home is not always a straightforward solution either. As I suggested before, the aspirations of most migrants to Tirupur are very high and given their awareness of the opportunities offered by the industry, they will only give up when all else has failed. Also, the pressure to do well from relatives is often very intense. Kumar from Chidambaram, for example, got stuck between Tirupur and his home village. Kumar came to Tirupur four years ago, holding a BSc in computer sciences. As there was no work for computer graduates in his village, he came to Tirupur in the hope of finding an IT job in one of the many exporting companies. However, lacking the necessary contacts, he failed to find a job that matched his qualifications and ended up operating a manual collar knitting machine. One year later he started production on his own with four knitting machines and in partnership with Ganeshan from Tanjavur, who he befriended in the factory where he was working.

However, over the last two years they have struggled to keep their unit going. Delays in payment of up to two or three months made it difficult for them to continue production, as they do not have access to sufficient working capital to bridge these delays. Finally, they stopped producing and started to work as *kulis* (wage labourers) again, while their own machines lay idle. Access to finance has been their main problem and their local networks are too restricted to raise the necessary working capital. Kumar is highly disappointed with his entire experience in Tirupur. Not only have his initial expectations of an IT job been shattered, but even the chances to materialise his second best option of starting

a knitting unit of his own seem increasingly remote. Forced to take up manual labour, Kumar has little to be proud of in his current situation. Why then have they not yet packed up and left the town? Waiting for the business to pick up, Kumar and Ganeshan still hope to go ahead with their own machines.

So far neither of them have seriously considered returning home, or rather they do not see returning as a viable option. They both said they would feel ashamed to go home at this point, as they would be arriving empty-handed. Kumar revealed that he simply cannot go home now because of *asingam* (shame): 'at home they would shout at me, because two years ago they had given me some money to start these machines'. He would disappoint his family and lose his prestige. He cannot go back 'because of *gowravam* (reputation)' back home. Going home now, they explained, would mean admitting to failure and would affect their status and credibility as young male earners and future husbands. They rather prefer to work as a *kuli* for some time (which no one at home knows about), save some money and then try their luck once more with their own machines. In fact, they seem not too concerned about having to work for a while as hired hands and the prospect of restarting their own unit keeps them going. What really demoralises them is their inability to live up to expectations and the thought of disappointing relatives at home. Modernity enhances opportunities but simultaneously entrenches a lack of success with an intensified sense of shame and failure. Tirupur is a tough place for Kumar and Ganeshan and their initial expectations had to be heavily compromised due to a lack of reliable networks and the 'right' contacts.

Other stories could be added to illustrate these 'failed routes', but they would merely reiterate the same points about the vital importance of local networks and the ambivalent nature of raised expectations. While high expectations drive migrant workers to accept bleak working conditions and endure severe setbacks, thereby enhancing their industrial commitment, they also intensify pressures and a sense of failure when they remain unfulfilled.

VI
Migrants, mobility, commitment and 'industrial modernity'

I have argued in this article that migrant workers to Tirupur are seen as highly committed, hard-working and reliable factory hands by their

employers in the knitwear industry. They are contrasted with the 'locals' who often shift between factories, are less committed to their employer, and whose main aim is to start their own business as soon as possible. This high level of commitment of migrants to industrial and urban work in general, and to their employer in particular, has to be understood within the framework of, first, their expectations of urban employment and the scope they see for upward mobility through industrial work; second, the extent to which the industry is able to fulfil at least some of the migrants' aspirations; and third, the migrants' relative success in locally constructing and mobilising the support of networks and patrons. Tirupur is known as a place that offers plenty of opportunities for 'everyone who is willing to work hard', and the example set by the current employers who made it from the ranks is particularly powerful for new arrivals. The migrant workers are well aware of the prospects of mobility through hard work, networking and partnerships, and, as in the case of Kumar and Ganeshan, the hope of setting up their own unit or business is never easily given up.

Moreover, the industry is organised around clusters of small production units, in which workers *have to* rely on friends, partners and patrons to enter the ranks of jobworkers and manufacturers, and in which manufacturers and exporters in turn *have to* rely on their 'good' workers to enhance their production capacity or to branch out in new directions. As mentioned earlier, Breman has convincingly argued that it is often not the lack of commitment of workers that is at stake, but that of those who employ them (Breman 1994: 187). In rural Gujarat, employers were by and large unwilling to commit themselves to the local workers but justified their preference for a cheaper and more docile migrant labour force through a discourse that depicted the locals as lazy and unreliable. In Tirupur, migrants also start at the bottom, but their employers are much more willing to take care of them, as they realise that one day they may need their workers to start up a new unit or to set up a partnership. The debate about 'commitment' is therefore best seen as primarily a discourse articulating employer concerns, rather than a 'sociological problem' asking for a solution.

Indeed, the commitment of workers does not lie in any sort of workers' psychology, but in the particular organisation of the industry, and the prospects it offers to new entrants. By arguing that migrants to Tirupur have real prospects of upward mobility, I am not denying however that their position within the industry is also a vulnerable one, marked by low skill, limited choices and high dependency. What needs emphasising, however, is that—contrary to received wisdom—this position has not

turned them into the least committed workers. Rather, the combination of dependency and prospects, of subordination and opportunity has turned the migrant into a reliable, loyal and co-operative worker who realises all too well that it is only through this attitude that partnerships can be consolidated and the prospects of mobility ultimately materialised. Having experienced scarcity and poverty in their home villages, migrants are attracted to Tirupur by a strong sense of opportunity, which differs remarkably from what they expect from rural employment and which is further intensified in town once they meet the concrete prospects offered by the knitwear industry.

This brings us back to Ferguson's *Expectations of modernity*, in which he contrasts the expectations of rural migrants on the Copperbelt about industrial employment and urban settlement with the realities they eventually had to face of a collapsing industry and of forced return migration to rural 'homes'. Expectations that an 'industrial modernity' would embody 'progress' concretised in economic security, social status and prestige were soon shattered by the experience of an 'industrial modernity' marked by decline, movements of return and profound feelings of loss and despair (Ferguson 1999: 38–81; 123–65). The expectations of the migrants to Tirupur, and to many other industrial centres in India (see Parry, this volume), are remarkably similar. Promises of economic progress, upward mobility and status enhancement are some of the most powerful images that colour the expectations of migrants on their entry to town and factory. However, the difference in Tirupur—so far at least—lies in the reality the migrants have met. For many of the migrants, opportunities were abundant, promises soon materialised and expectations were fulfilled. In Tirupur, 'industrial modernity' turned out to be not a mere myth, but a reality which has fulfilled many expectations of migrant workers such as Pandian, Sakthi or Muthu. When meeting Sakthi on his way to his newly-built bungalow, with his expensive sunglasses, his colourful shirt, and his brand new Yamaha motorbike shining in the sun, it is not hard to imagine how the 'industrial modernity' of Tirupur has changed his life, even beyond his own initial expectations.

However, I hasten to modify this picture of prosperity and point out some of the ambiguities that shape the migrants' experiences of modernity. Expectations are never easily implemented. Constant struggles and setbacks darken even the most promising developments, and a widespread discourse of 'toil', thrift and sacrifice reflects the many hardships that have to be faced often for minor steps forward. Moreover, Tirupur's

knitwear industry has never been a complete success for everyone. This account has not even begun to discuss the gloomy situation of the migrants who did return home on seeing little chance of urban advancement, of the lowest castes who are doomed to stay behind in the lowest paid dead-end jobs, and of the women workers who are increasingly preferred in the export industry. And, for those who fail to fulfil higher expectations, such as Kumar and Ganeshan, modernity has introduced new pressures and a sense of shame and failure that may thoroughly upset their confidence and self-esteem. In sum, both as a discourse of ideals, expectations and imagined possibilities, and as a process of mobility and migration, 'industrial modernity' is experienced by most migrant workers as a genuinely ambivalent encounter with enhanced promises and intensified struggles. The investment in networks of friends and partners, the reliance on patrons and employers, and the alternation of subsequent successes and failures lie at the core of a process of engagement and negotiation that shapes not only the migrants' experiences of modernity but also the particular form and meaning this modernity takes on for each of them.

REFERENCES

BHATTACHARYA, U.K. 1999 Clouds 'in the making' of an industrial district?: A note on 'the knitwear cluster of Tiruppur'. *In* A.K. Bagchi, ed., *Economy and organization: Indian institutions under the neoliberal regime*, pp. 122–46. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

BREMAN, J. 1985. *Of peasants, migrants and paupers: Rural labour circulation and capitalist production in west India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press

———. 1994 *Wage hunters and gatherers*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1996 *Footloose labour: Working in India's informal economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1999. The study of industrial labour in post-colonial India—The formal sector: An introductory review. *In* J.P. Parry, J. Breman and K. Kapadia, eds., *The worlds of Indian industrial labour*, pp. 1–42. New Delhi. Sage Publications.

CAWTHORNE, P. 1990. Amoebic capitalism as a form of accumulation: The case of the cotton knitwear industry in a south Indian town. Unpublished Ph.D thesis. Milton Keynes Open University.

———. 1995. Of networks and markets: The rise and rise of a south Indian town, the example of Tiruppur's cotton knitwear industry. *World development* 23, 1. 43–56.

CHAKRABARTY, D. 1989 *Rethinking working-class history: Bengal 1890–1940*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

CHANDAVARKAR, R. 1994 *The origins of industrial capitalism in India: Business strategies and the working classes in Bombay, 1900–1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CHARI, S. 2000a. *The agrarian question comes to town: Making knitwear work in Tiruppur, south India*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Berkeley: University of California.

———. 2000b. The agrarian origins of the knitwear industrial cluster in Tiruppur, India. *World development* 28, 3: 579–99.

DE HAAN, A. 1994. *Unsettled settlers: Migrant workers and industrial capitalism in Calcutta*. Hilversum: Verloren.

DE NEVE, G. 1999a. Tamil warps and wefts. An anthropological study of urban weavers in south India. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London.

———. 1999b. Asking for and giving *baki*: Neo-bondage, or the interplay of bondage and resistance in the Tamilnadu power-loom industry. *In* J.P. Parry, J. Breman and K. Kapadia, eds., *The worlds of Indian industrial labour*, pp. 379–406. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

FERGUSON, J. 1999. *Expectations of modernity: Myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

GLUCKMAN, M. 1961. Anthropological problems arising from the African industrial revolution. *In* A. Southall, ed., *Social change in modern Africa*, pp. 67–82. London: Oxford University Press.

HOLMSTRÖM, M. 1976. *South Indian factory workers: Their life and their world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1984. *Industry and inequality. The social anthropology of Indian labour*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

KAPADIA, K. 1999. Gender ideologies and the formation of rural industrial classes in south India today. *In* J.P. Parry, J. Breman and K. Kapadia, eds., *The worlds of Indian industrial labour*, pp. 329–52. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

LAMBERT, H. 1996. Caste, gender and locality in rural Rajasthan. *In* C.J. Fuller, ed., *Caste today*, pp. 93–123. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 2000 Sentiment and substance in north Indian forms of relatedness. *In* J. Carsten, ed., *Cultures of relatedness: New approaches to the study of kinship*, pp. 73–89. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LAMBERT, R.D. 1963. *Workers, factories, and social change in India*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

MAYER, P. 1961. *Townsmen or tribesmen: Conservatism and the process of urbanization in a South African city*. New York: Oxford University Press.

MILLS, M.B. 1999a. *Thai women in the global labor force: Consuming desires, contesting selves*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press

———. 1999b. Migrant labour takes a holiday: Reworking modernity and marginality in contemporary Thailand. *Critique of anthropology* 19, 1: 31–51.

MITCHELL, J.C. 1961. Wage labour and African population movements in Central Africa. *In* K.M. Barbour and R.M. Prothero, eds , *Essays on African population*, pp 193–248. New York: Frederick A. Praeger.

———. 1966. Theoretical orientations in African urban studies. *In* M. Banton, eds., *The social anthropology of complex societies*, pp. 37–68. London: Tavistock.

MOORE, W.E and A.S. FELDMAN. 1960. *Labor commitment and social change in developing areas*. New York: Social Science Research Council.

MORRIS, M.D 1960. The labour market in India. *In* W.E. Moore and A S. Feldman, eds., *Labor commitment and social change in developing areas*, pp 173–200. New York: Social Science Research Council.

MORRIS, M.D 1965. *The emergence of an industrial labor force in India: A study of the Bombay cotton mills, 1854–1947*. Berkeley. University of California Press.

NIEHOFF, A. 1959. *Factory workers in India*. Milwaukee: Redtke Bros. & Kortsch Co.

ONG, A. 1987. *Spirits of resistance and capitalist discipline: Factory women in Malaysia*. New York: State University of New York Press.

———. 1991. The gender and labor politics of postmodernity. *Annual review of anthropology* 20: 279–309.

ORNATI, O.A. 1955. *Jobs and workers in India*. Institute of International Industrial and Labour Relations, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

OSELLA, F. and C. OSELLA. 2000. *Social mobility in Kerala: Modernity and identity in conflict*. London: Pluto Press.

PARRY, J.P. 1999. Lords of labour: Working and shirking in Bhilai. *In* J.P. Parry, J. Breman and K. Kapadia, eds., *The worlds of Indian industrial labour*, pp. 107–40. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

ROFEL, L. 1999. *Other modernities: Gendered yearnings in China after socialism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

SEN, S. 1999. *Women and labour in late colonial India: The Bengal jute industry*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

SHETH, N.R. 1968. *The social framework of an Indian factory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

SHIVA RAO, B. 1939. *The industrial worker in India*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

SINGER, M. 1971. Beyond tradition and modernity in Madras. *Comparative studies in society and history* 13: 160–95.

SWAMINATHAN, P. and J. JEYARANJAN. 1999. The knitwear cluster in Tiruppur: An Indian industrial district in the making? *In* A.K. Bagchi, ed., *Economy and organization: Indian institutions under the neoliberal regime*, pp. 94–121. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

TIRUPPUR EXPORTERS' ASSOCIATION. Annual review. 2000.

Seasonal migration, employer-worker interactions, and shifting ethnic identities in contemporary West Bengal

Ben Rogaly, Daniel Coppard, Kumar Rana, Abdur Rafique, Amrita Sengupta and Jhuma Biswas

This article tells of changing social and spatial identities in the countryside of contemporary West Bengal. It draws on a study of interactions between those seeking wage work in agriculture and the people trying to recruit them. We find a continuing and nested process of both self-identification and categorisation. Unconscious as well as conscious ethnic affinities are consolidated and changed. At the same time, identities are used instrumentally by workers to make the outcome of negotiations less demeaning, and by employers to bargain more effectively for the workforce they need. The context is one of the emergence of capitalist production relations in agriculture, presided over by a coalition government led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The newly prosperous agriculture has been a source of wealth for capitalist employers, reinforcing constructions of difference in relation to the migrant workers they employ. At the same time, many employers are attracted by the prospects of urban jobs and life-styles and invest in their children's education. Migrant workers show a similar ambivalence, being attracted by the potential earnings and consumption possibilities arising out of being employed in the West Bengal 'rice bowl', and simultaneously repelled by the dangers they associate with the place.

Ben Rogaly and **Daniel Coppard** are at the School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ, UK. From September 2003, Rogaly will be at the School of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 9SJ, UK.

Kumar Rana, **Abdur Rafique** and **Amrita Sengupta** are at the Pratichi Trust, Deer Park, Santiniketan, West Bengal, 731235, India.

Jhuma Biswas is at the Department of Social Work, Visva-Bharati, Sriniketan, West Bengal 731236, India

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

I
Introduction

Migration has been seen by many authors as both reflective of culture and constitutive of it (e.g., Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson 1998: 207). In this article, we examine one kind of employment migration—seasonal migration for manual work. Such seasonal migration necessarily involves: (*a*) *repeated journeys* to and from 'other' places (by both migrants and recruiting employers); and (*b*) *interactions* around recruitment, travelling, daily life in an employer's outbuildings, and transplanting or harvesting rice in an employer's fields, usually under his or his agent's instruction or supervision. While rural-urban long-term migration has long been acknowledged as a 'construction site' (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, cited by Jenkins 2000: 14) for self-identification as part of a larger ethnic group,[1] such processes have not been examined for rural-rural migrants who move for only a few weeks at a time.[2]

The major purpose of this article is to analyse some of the ways in which self-identification as a member of a group beyond close kin is shifted and/or consolidated during the process of seasonal migration. This shifting involves 'sensations of ethnic affinity ... founded on common life experiences that generate similar habitual dispositions' (Bentley 1987: 32). Such affinities are consolidated and change over time and place as life is experienced. Migration and employment as (or recruitment of) migrant workers, are important fields of common experience.

We emphasise interactions, as it is these sightings, conversations, disputes, negotiations, asides, and silences which are both revealing of the relational processes of identity formation, dissolution and reconstitution

Acknowledgements: District level fieldwork began in March 1999. Research with migrant workers and their employers took place between August 1999 and September 2000. We thank Sujata Das Chowdhury who assisted Coppard during his fieldwork in the Puruliya study locality. We are grateful to the Department for International Development (UK) for funding this research; to Phillip Judge for the map, to Filippo Osella both for helping us to get the article into shape through insightful feedback and suggestions, and for his hands-on approach to editing the final version. We are also grateful to Katy Gardner, John Harriss, Nitya Rao, Alpa Shah, Patricia Uberoi, and an anonymous referee for comments; and to Elena Ruiz Abril for research assistance. However, the authors alone are responsible for views expressed and any errors of fact or interpretation.

[1] Including by several anthropologists of the Manchester School (e.g., Abner Cohen and Philip Mayer; see Banks 1996: 31–36).

[2] Chopra (1995) being one important exception.

(Jenkins 2000),[3] and amenable to ethnographic study (see Appadurai 1989: 271). For Jenkins, interactions with others include not only self-identification but also categorisation—categorisation both of self by others, and of others by self.[4] Categorisation adds an additional dimension to Bentley's consideration of ethnic affinity as being founded on common life experiences (Bentley 1987). At least, it makes explicit a part of the experience of life disregarded in Bentley's theorisation of ethnicity and practice. Sensations of ethnic affinity are generated in part by how others speak about and act towards one. Bentley's use of Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' is nevertheless useful because it acknowledges ethnic affinities as unconscious and always in process (thus moving beyond ethnicity as primordial), while not denying their existence—as a purely instrumentalist theory of ethnicity might do.

In this article, however, the shifting (or consolidating) of identities also involves something more intentional: the performance of, and play on, ethnicity. The elision of the concepts of ethnicity and identity is not accidental here. We are concerned primarily with the interrelation between seasonal migration and shifting ethnic identities. These include territorially-based (spatial) identities, as well as membership of social groups based on *jati*, religion, or nation.[5] We pursue a situationalist approach, which allows for the foregrounding of particular dimensions of identity in specific time and space contexts (see Okamura 1981; Rew and Campbell 1999: 10).

For part of our argument we take on board insights of instrumentalist theories. Instrumentalism is not necessarily limited to material ends—though these are fundamental to migrant workers, whose survival would be at risk if there was no work to go to, and similarly employers who (in our study) revealed anxieties about finding adequate numbers of workers

[3] A similar point is made in Bauder's (2001) examination of the importance of cultural interactions in producing labour market identities. Consider also the passage by James Clifford, cited by Chambers (1994.1): 'If we rethink culture .. in terms of travel, then the organic, naturalising bias of the term culture—seen as a rooted body that grows, lives, dies, etc.—is questioned Constructed and disputed *historicities*, sites of displacement, interference, and interaction, come more sharply into view' (author's emphasis).

[4] The study of changing group self-identifications among migrant workers and their employers inevitably involves its own categorisation process by analysts There is no single way for the analyst to convey the meaning of being a migrant. The choices made influence the ways in which a person becomes 'marked as a migrant' (Chopra 1995: 3162). Moreover, migrants may be objectified as migrants in a text but not refer to themselves as such (see, e.g., Samuels 2001).

[5] That we choose this focus here should not be read as a denial of the importance of other dimensions of identity (including personal identities based on gender, age, birth order) or of their interactions with ethnic identities.

at the right time for the period needed. Depending on who the subject is, the instrumental use of ethnic identities in labour market interactions is also importantly about resisting or retaining domination on the basis of self-esteem and dignity. This applies to individuals as well as groups. It may involve the assertion of ethnicity as a factor in labour market negotiations—the money wage is directly linked to well-being, but so is the subjective experience of being recruited, employed, housed and fed, away from home. The process involves making instrumental use of identities as discursive resources in an ongoing struggle to retain/diminish the symbolic capital (prestige) associated with a particular class and ethnic position. This manifestation of instrumentality is closest to the notion of contests over boundaries discussed by Barth and contributors (1969).

Struggle takes place in a context. Here it is one of agrarian change with the expansion of profitable labour-intensive rice cultivation by landowners and tenants in irrigated areas, enabled by a managed 'peace' (Williams 2001) in the countryside. This follows a unique set of agrarian reforms, which themselves represent the consolidation of the hegemony of landed (but smallholder) classes and caste groups. Many of the wealthier and more successful employers of labour assert their social rank through withdrawal from manual work, purchase of expensive consumer goods, and investment in education outside local circuits with an eye on urban life-styles and white-collar work. This push for social distinction by richer people has been enabled by the labour of low-caste and tribal manual workers (not all of them migrants), who themselves have been impressed by the sheer wealth generated by capitalist agriculture.

Both employers and migrant workers have ambivalent views of these rural and urban life-styles, however. Employers' ambivalence is expressed in their pride in the economic success of agriculture in their sub-region on the one hand, and their aspiration for white-collar, urban employment on the other. Workers' ambivalence comes through in their simultaneous affective attachment to home and sense of danger and pollution in what they call *bidesh* (abroad: see Gardner 1995), and their attraction to the wealth and consumption possibilities (though mainly for others) in *bidesh* itself. In the latter case, repulsion is stronger than attraction, and migration for manual work is usually economically compelled. This repulsion is manifest in the play on disinterest in work, which has the effect of ratcheting up employers' anxieties.

In West Bengal, as elsewhere, workers and employers are not clear-cut categories, though they do reflect local notions of *munish* (labour) and *malik* (boss). Moreover, the relationship between these 'classes' may in some circumstances be less polarised than relations within them. What

Marxist authors have referred to as negotiated contradictions (Casanova 2001) and unequal mutuality (Rudra 1992: 404–5) well expresses the continuing cooperative engagement necessary if there is to be a relationship between classes. Others have discussed workers' ambivalence to long-term personalised employment relations precisely because of the co-existence of class contradiction and interdependence (e.g., Harris 1994).[6] It is because of the inevitable reliance of each on the other that discursive contests, in which each group categorises and stereotypes the other, are of importance. 'I have no choice but to interact with one of you but I can feel better about it if I can (continue to) put you in your place.'

The article proceeds as follows. First, we briefly set out the regional social, economic and political changes that form the background to the seasonal migration and processes of self-identification and categorisation that we will be discussing here. Next we explain the methods used in our study. We then move to a description of labour market places, recruitment processes, and how identities are used instrumentally within them. After this, we discuss different ways in which ethnic identities based on place, nation and religion have shifted/consolidated through migration and recruitment. Finally, we reflect on the ambivalence of both 'classes' (destination employers and migrant workers) towards involvement in capitalist agriculture.

II
The emergence of capitalist agriculture in West Bengal

Barddhaman district and adjoining areas have received migrant workers for rice cultivation work for well over a century (Rogaly 1999). However, in the last thirty years there has been a big increase in the number of people migrating into the sub-region seasonally, with estimates of as many as 500,000 people in a single season. Moreover, the number of seasons in which employment in rice work is available for migrants has doubled since the 1970s with the widespread adoption of an additional summer rice crop (*boro*) (Rogaly et al. 2001).

The large number of people migrating in the 1999–2000 seasons, when fieldwork for this study was carried out, reflect a specific historical moment. The growth in the number of days worked and the number of

[6] In his debate with Tom Brass, John Harriss, though explicit about clients' ambivalence towards such relations, emphasises the use of ideals of 'moral economy' by clients to push patrons into continuing protection (1994).

workers is correlated to the mechanisation of agriculture in southern West Bengal (Rogaly et al. 2001). This is evident in mechanised tillage, and in electric and diesel groundwater extraction and threshing machines, all of which directly reduced the demand for labour in ploughing, irrigation and threshing, but indirectly increased demand for harvesters and transplanters. There has also been an expansion of motorised transport—tractors which carry harvested sheaves of paddy to threshing grounds, more *moram* (all weather stony) and *pich* (tarmacked) roads, and greater numbers of bus routes and buses, mostly run by private companies.

Migrant workers tend to differ from local workers, both at home and at their destination workplaces, in that they are less involved in personalised labour arrangements. We will discuss the merits and demerits of such arrangements and of patron-client relations more generally below. It is important to note here that, alongside mechanisation, a greater proportion of migrant workers was now being employed in Barddhaman district than had been the case earlier, and there was thus an increase in relatively impersonal employment arrangements.

The CPI(M) portrayed itself as bringing capitalist production relations to rural Bengal by ridding it of 'feudal elements' through agrarian reforms,[7] and as implementing an elected local government before any other major state government in India. The most dynamic and energetic phases of these reforms took place during the United Front government of the late 1960s and the first term of the Left Front government. The first of these phases involved the support of a coalition government, in which the CPI(M) was a partner, for the seizure of land held in surplus of the legally permitted ceiling. Following years of repression by Congress regimes in the early and mid-1970s, the CPI(M) was elected in 1977 with an absolute majority and had led the coalition Left Front government ever since. The second of the two phases saw the energetic implementation of a sharecropper's registration programme (Operation Barga), and the continuing redistribution of land held over the legal ceiling. In the first year of power, the Left Front government implemented Panchayati Raj. These were very significant changes which, together with the memory of the previous bloody years, have contributed to six successive Left Front election victories at the state level.

[7] As one government minister explained to us in December 2000, capitalist production relations were 'progressive' in relation to the feudal relations which preceded them—and the migration of workers could be seen in the same terms. (Interview with Surja Kanta Mishra, then Minister of Land, Land Reforms, Rural Development and Panchayats, Kolkata, 14 December 2000.)

The technological changes in agriculture referred to at the beginning of this section have closely, but not precisely, overlapped with the period of Left Front rule. For example, the Damodar Valley Corporation's canal irrigation system, which enabled double cropping of rice in parts of Barddhaman district, had been completed in the 1960s, the *boro* crop being introduced from the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, it was the Left Front that brought relative stability to the West Bengal countryside in the 1980s and 1990s, and created the environment in which smallholders were willing to risk investment in the groundwater irrigation pumpsets that formed the main technical motor for the expansion of capitalist production (see Rawal 2001).

III
The study

The spatial mobility of workers, men, women and children, was self-evident to anyone travelling by bus between Bankura town and Barddhaman district during the *aman* paddy harvest in the 1990s,[1] and even from the vantage point of the village where one of us stayed (in Monteswar Panchayat Samiti, Barddhaman district) during 1991–92 (see Rogaly 1994, 1999). To that single village, workers came from as far afield as Jalpaiguri district to the far north of West Bengal, Purbi Singhbhum district to the south-west (and over the border in Bihar—now Jharkhand), and various points in-between. Moreover, workers from different places came at different times of the year and were recruited by different means.

Seasonal migration, which grew so rapidly during the last quarter of the 20th century, involves increased interaction between groups with different ethnic and spatial identities: between Muslim workers from Murshidabad district and Hindu cultivators of Barddhaman; between Santal *adivasis* in the highlands of Santal Parganas (now in Jharkhand state) and Bengali *dikus* (non-tribals, including Muslims) who came to recruit them in their villages for rice work in the alluvial plains or took up residence in Santal Parganas as traders and moneylenders. People from Puruliya, Bankura, western Medinipur and Purbi Singhbhum districts, all on the eastern edge of the Chottanagpur plateau (partly in West

[1] *Aman* rice is transplanted in the monsoon (July–August) and harvested in the winter (November–December). *Boro* rice, which is entirely dependent on irrigation, is transplanted in February and harvested in May.

Bengal and partly in Jharkhand states—see Map) came from diverse self-identified ethnic groups, including Mahatos, Santals, Bauri, Bhumij, Mals and Sabars.

In our study, self-identification and categorisation based on ideas of place are at least as important as, and indeed overlap with, those based on dimensions of group identity, such as caste, tribe and religion. This is because the destination area, itself rural, is seen by many of its own inhabitants as being a place of central importance in relation to the surrounding hinterland from which migrant workers come. While the physical distances travelled by migrants are relatively short and journeys are usually completed in a day, these journeys are *experienced* as much longer. Travel is arduous in dangerously overcrowded buses, and seeking work at labour marketplaces is stressful and filled with uncertainty. Moreover, distances between home and destination are also great in cultural terms—compounded by the physical experience of living in employers' cowsheds, other mud-built outbuildings, or makeshift straw shelters.[9]

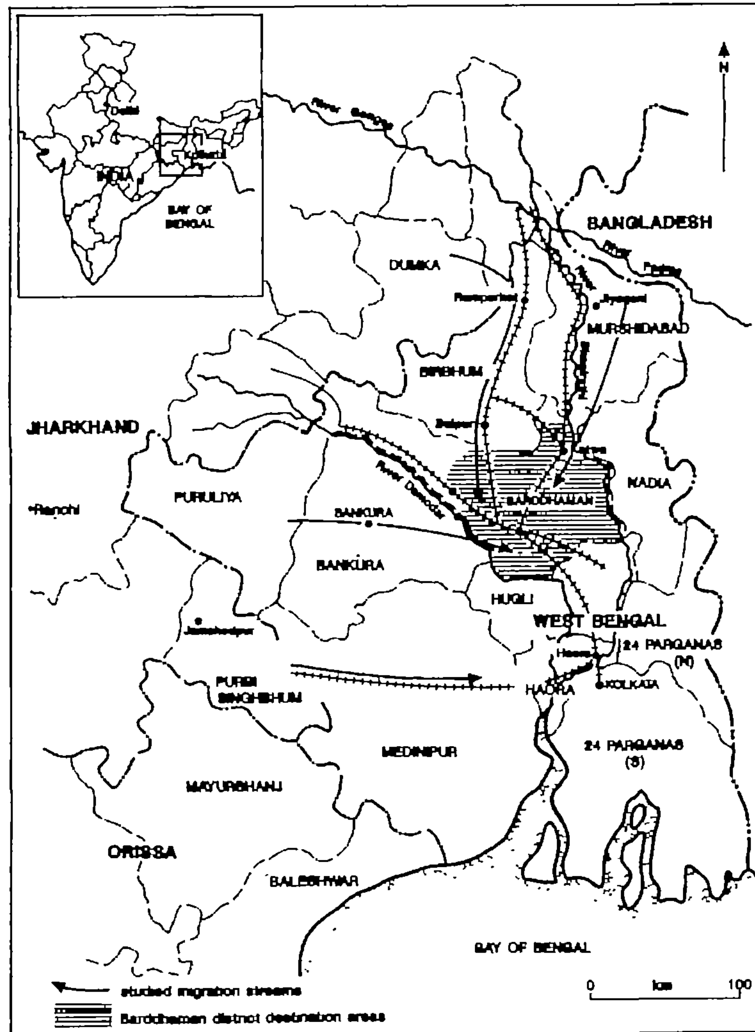
In order to study the interactions involved in work-seeking and recruitment, as well as at migrants' workplaces, living quarters and source areas, a regional study was undertaken of the different places, societies and economies within the region supplying workers to the West Bengal rice bowl. We first spent three months travelling in fifteen districts to ascertain the main places from which migrants came for work in the rice bowl, and the main destination areas. Then four of us took up residence in a source area, each one part of a different migration stream into Barddhaman or Medinipur (see Map): Dumka district of the former Santal Parganas (Rana); the *bagri* region[10] of Murshidabad district (Rafique); the border area of Puruliya-Bankura (Coppard) (all these being source areas for Barddhaman); and Purbi Singhbhum (Biswas) (a source area for Medinipur). The fifth (Sengupta) set up home in a village in the Galsi area of Barddhaman to study seasonal migration from the employers' perspectives. Rogaly moved between them, visited other destination area villages, district officials and labour marketplaces, as well as training the others in data collection methods through long duration fieldwork. He also structured and led reflective meetings (held for a fortnight every

[9] In a study of Friulian workers in Italy, the experience of living temporarily away from home was found to cause them to 'readdress conditions in [their] homeland .. By migrating, their cultural identity (that of the homeland) [was] reaffirmed and reconstituted (when remembering home/cuisine/church/values)' (Holmes 1989: 79–84).

[10] The *bagri* region of Murshidabad district is that part of the district which lies to the east of the river Bhagirathi.

Map

Four streams of seasonal migration into or across West Bengal



Source: Drawn by Philip Judge.

three months) at which the methods were refined based on insights gained along the way. Fieldwork was not simply about staying in a village, but about travelling with migrant workers to the destination areas, spending time in labour marketplaces, and—in Sengupta's case—travelling with an employer from Galsi to Puruliya to recruit labour.

We will now discuss selected illustrations of interactions in recruitment and work seeking processes, in which identity is played on and performed instrumentally.

IV
Recruiting 'labour' and seeking work: Playing on identities

The Left Front regime in West Bengal succeeded in the 1980s and 1990s in mediating conflicts between workers and employers. Local cadres of the ruling party or elected members of the CPI(M)-dominated Gram Panchayats would be called on to resolve disputes. Some migrant workers from the two Jharkhand study localities—in Purbi Singhbhum and Dumka districts—based their decisions to travel for work on the reputation of CPI(M) and the West Bengal Gram Panchayats for forcing wayward employers to pay up. In spite of this reputation and the actual practices of *panchayats*, political parties and the Krishak Sabha, the process of seasonal migration is riven by tensions. One important tension is the uncertainty of employers regarding their supply of labour. The extent of this uncertainty varies according to locally specific labour market conditions, not just season to season but day to day.

There are two major means of recruitment of labour: via a labour marketplace, and via known people/locations (wage workers/employers). Each has different advantages and disadvantages from the perspectives of the different parties, who also change over time. Recruitment at labour marketplaces tends to occur between employers or their agents, travelling alone or in pairs, and gangs of workers, ranging from five to fifty in number, who have a leader or *sardar*, who acts as spokesperson. The two busiest labour marketplaces in our study were at Bankura's Gobinda Nagar bus stand and at Katwa railway station. At Bankura there were marked contrasts in labour market conditions both within and between seasons.

Within the *aman* harvest season, it was clear that labour market advantages varied from day to day, with labourers able to strike a better

deal for themselves on days when they were relatively few in number. On such days, as many as five employers would compete directly with each other over the same gang of labourers. In this type of situation, employers would try to coax labourers into working for them: '*chalo amader kaj kore dekhbe amra kemon lok*' ('come and work with us and see what kind of people we are'), said one employer overheard at Katwa station labour marketplace. He was trying to sell himself to prospective workers—to portray himself as morally upright and true-to-his-word. In contrast to the scene from the *aman* harvest migration, at the time of *boro* transplanting there were hardly any employers at all at Bankura bus stand, though we saw many gangs of labourers. Almost all the labourers had made advance arrangements with employers they had worked for during the *aman* rice harvest.

In the streams from Santal Parganas, Puruliya/Bankura and Purbi Singhbhum, we found a preponderance of employment arranged in advance. Like the labour marketplace recruitment, the way this was done varied. Employers from eastern Medinipur areas of the rice bowl would visit the Singhbhum locality, where they were well-known, to gather sufficient labourers. In the Puruliya locality, wage workers would be recruited on behalf of known employers by local *sardars* or gang leaders, who were in part self-appointed and in part recognised by employers. In this locality,[11] two particular *sardars* were very well-established with employers of a certain village in Barddhaman district and were able to place large numbers of people (up to fifty) in work each season. There was some preference for the *sardars*' own caste fellows, respectively Mahato and Deshwali Majhi—but others, particularly from the Lohar and Bauri castes, tended to migrate with their own gang leaders through negotiation at labour marketplaces. Migrants from Santal Parganas were all recruited by employers visiting the locality. These employers were often known, but there was a steady turnover and new employers would arrive following word of mouth.

Employers we spoke to perceived advantages from repeated relations with particular *sardars*, workers or villagers in terms of lower recruitment costs, greater reliability and an opportunity to exert moral pressure based on familiarity. However, there were also costs. For example, one employer stated that it was disadvantageous to continue to hire labourers from the same source area for too long as relations had developed which made it impossible to be rude to them, the latter being necessary since the labourers had ceased working as hard as they used to. For labourers, repeated

[11] We do not know if this pattern existed more widely in that source area or stream.

relations with the same destination area employer meant that they knew better what to expect and had more information about the length of prospective employment. However, they also knew that wages could be lower and obligations for additional work might develop over the long term.

This illustrates the fuzzy boundary between personalised and impersonalised labour arrangements for seasonal migrant workers. In his discussion of agricultural labour relations between employers and workers of the same village, Harriss (1994) shows that different attitudes were expressed by different workers. He writes of 'less specific labour attachment—which some value and others resent and scorn bitterly'. Turning to the 'rich peasants', Harriss suggests a clear-cut preference for the lower degree of obligation entailed in employing outsiders (ibid.: 186). Drawing on Scott's (1990) terminology, he is careful to distinguish 'hidden' from 'public transcripts'—a distinction that is useful in helping us to decipher where self-identification is used instrumentally. Writing about young male labourers in Kerala, Osella and Osella also examine 'the obvious tension which exists for these young men between the necessity of [labour ties] and remaining faithful to their rejection of what they consider as "demeaning" working arrangements' (1996: 61). The Osellas draw attention to the practice of achieving long-term commitment from the landowner by declaring loyalty to the landowner's political party. There is a parallel to this among migrant gang leaders from Jharkhand to West Bengal, who became 'party' men for the duration of their stay at the destination.

Both employers and labourers made use of social categories, and the boundaries between them, in the recruitment and negotiation process. Like Gary Younge, a black British journalist of Barbadian parentage describing his childhood in Stevenage in Hertfordshire, they played with various self-identifications.

> We would pick'n'mix, and the answer we gave depended partly on what we thought the motivation for the question was, partly on the fact that nobody gave us the option of being both at the same time, and partly on what we perceived our interests to be at any given moment (Younge 1999: 12).

Many employers travelling to source areas to recruit migrant workers[12] would deliberately try to break the codes of their caste and class to make

[12] Women from employers' households did not travel to the source areas to recruit.

themselves familiar with and trusted by migrant workers and their families. An employer recruiting in the Santal Parganas locality emphasised that his family had been hiring labourers from the locality for three generations: '*amar thakurda asto, amar baba asto, ekhan amaro dari peke gelo*' ('my grandfather came to this village, my father came to this village and now even my beard has turned grey'). This can be interpreted as a public declaration of familiarity which seeks to achieve an end: recruitment. Yet at the same time, in an aside to Rana, he cursed having to stay in such proximity to the Santals and having to take 'their dirty children onto my lap'. This private declaration can also be interpreted as having an instrumental aim: to put distance between self and Santal, perhaps in order to avoid losing face by showing too close a familiarity with tribal labourers. This reminds us that identity production 'is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation' (Hall 1990: 222).

The tone of the recruiting employer with whom Sengupta travelled to Puruliya during the *aman* rice harvest of 1999 was similar. While he publicly took tea from the mother of a potential migrant and accepted further offers of food and hospitality, he exclaimed privately to Sengupta that: '*dekchen to ki asubidha choto loker deshe eshe amadero mile mishe jete hoi. Ki karbo?*' ('Just see how much inconvenience we go through mixing with people in this poor people's [perjorative] region'). In another aside, he remarked that: '*era boka soka, tai oder niye jai, beshi chalak hole pere uthtam na*' ('we only take these people because they are so foolish; we would not employ them if they were more cunning'). It was in fact the employer who showed lack of judgement in this case: the potential labourers themselves were carefully weighing up the options of going with him or taking their chance elsewhere, and eventually stood him up. In all this, maintenance of dignity and avoidance of demeaning arrangements come into play, to be weighed alongside material motives.

At labour marketplaces, potential labourers sized up how much employment they would get from particular employers.[13] *Bagri* labourers felt they knew which blocks in Barddhaman had the largest landholdings, so their interview with employers would be used to establish the employer's exact location within the destination area. Observations at Katwa

[13] In contrast to other streams, in the *bagri-rarh* stream almost all migrant agricultural wage workers sought work unsolicited. Since there was thus much more uncertainty about proper payment, they would not only be sizing up employers regarding the probable length of employment, but also trying, through conversation, to work out how reliable they would be in terms of payment.

railway station labour market suggested that many employers who hired labour here were not the biggest players (even if they pretended to be bigger than they were): the latter would have organised recruitment from known sources. This explains why in several cases the duration of work offered was relatively short and, unlike in the other streams, some migrants returned to the labour marketplace two or three times in the same season.

In situations where there was a relatively high ratio of employers to labourers in the labour market, employers displayed verbal skills and tricks in order to try to undermine each other's chance of recruiting a particular gang. At Bankura bus stand in the monsoonal rice harvest of 1999, five employers were talking to a group of seventeen labourers simultaneously. The labourers were Mahatos. One employer said: '*ek, paanch, ponero, jatodin kaj chaibi pabi, kano asubidha habena, ekjon ke katha de sabaike kamrachhis keno*' ('you can have as much or as little work as you like—one day, five days, fifteen days, there will be no problem, why are you tempting so many employers—why not just give your word to one?'). Another said that many employers will promise a lot but none of them can give employment for fifty days. One employer commented that all this talk was increasing the rate for everyone else. In this case, the performance of employers against each other appeared counterproductive.

Significantly, food and its consumption are often an issue in the self-identifications of different groups, as well as being closely involved in labourers' efforts to avoid the more humiliating aspects of employment in rural manual work. Muslim labourers from the area known as *bagri* differ from migrants from Santal Parganas and Puruliya in that they do not usually cook for themselves. Whereas workers from the Santal Parganas and Puruliya streams receive *sidha* (uncooked rice and other cooking ingredients as a payment in kind, a portion of their wage), the *bagri* migrants receive cooked food, a particularly sensitive issue when Muslim workers are employed by Hindus.[14] The two communities have views not only about how food should be served, but also how it should be served to members of the other group. Muslim workers were aware from their own experience and that of others that, if employed by a Hindu, they would be expected to eat in the courtyard and to clean the ground

[14] This is not surprising, considering the intricate and hierarchical practices associated with the exchanging of substances through accepting food in other South Asian settings (e.g., Osella and Osella 1996; Raheja 1989).

where they had sat to eat with cow-dung. Many of them felt this was too much of an insult and actively sought Muslim employers, though one Muslim employer told us that he deliberately avoided hiring Muslims—Santals were more hard-working in his view. However, clearly the experience of working for Hindu employers away from home had been felt by some Muslim workers as demeaning, strengthening the sense of polarity between Muslims and Hindus.[15] Here ethnic affinity becomes consolidated and assimilated to a wider religious identity through the experience of migration. (We will discuss this process at greater length in the following section.)

In more than one negotiation, Rafique heard Muslim gang leaders say that their group would not work for a particular (Hindu) employer even though he was offering two rupees per day above the going rate. This statement about the relative priorities of money and respect for this group of labourers demonstrated that they had the strength to manage with less money if they could retain their group self-esteem. Labourers held on to a sense of ethnic affinity as a means of protection from what they considered to be demeaning arrangements.

V
Shifting spatial affinities

The central argument of this article is that interactions with people outside one's own locale—during travel and work as seasonal migrants and as employer-recruiters—are shaped by and influence their ethnic self-identification. In this section we examine how a territorial self-identification emerges out of such interactions. Discussing the impact of globalisation on regional and local identities, Y. Singh argues that local identities are sharpened by the sense of relative deprivation emerging from uneven regional economic growth and modernisation (2001: 258–59). As Singh suggests, the ethnic and spatial components of identity construction cannot be satisfactorily separated (ibid.: 255). The self-identification and categorisation of people with places—home and away—which follows, is intimately connected with self-identification and categorisation of people with ethnic groups. In fact, an emphasis on place and ethnicity and their interaction can subvert a narrow polarisation

[15] Chatterji (1998) shows how, in Bengal, the category Muslim is internally differentiated and infused with Bengaliness in spite of a categorisation process which has placed 'Bengalis' and 'Muslims' as mutually exclusive social identities.

on ethnic lines, bringing attention to 'diverse differences' and 'plural identities' (Sen 2001). For the purpose of the present analysis, however, we will first look at spatial identifications before turning to other components of ethnic identifications.

The sense of the foreignness of the rice bowl is common to migrants from the hinterland areas; at the same time the foreignness of the hinterland area was predominant in the minds of the employers. Yet the meaning of *bidesh*—foreign place—for migrants varied across the different sub-regions, as it did for rice bowl employers.[16] We will consider these in turn.

Bagri

The *bagri* sub-region is a Muslim majority section of the predominantly Muslim district of Murshidabad. The district is separated from Bangladesh by the river Padma, which, like all Bengal's great rivers, continues to shift its course over time (see Bose 1993); *bagri* is the section of Murshidabad which lies to the east of the Bhagirathi/Ganga. Murshidabad district was disputed at Partition, when claims were made that it should be part of East Pakistan, but Murshidabad was ultimately 'traded' with the Hindu-majority district of Khulna, which did go with East Pakistan (Chatterji 1999). But the people of *bagri* have a sub-regional identity as well as religious ones. Their 'other' is *rarh*, the area to the west of the Bhagirathi/Ganga (see Map). Encounters with Rafique, a Muslim from West Bengal, but a *rarhi*, brought out some features of sub-regional identity in this locality. Comparisons made by *bagri* respondents with *rarhi* culture included ideas that *rarhi* people were stingy with food,[17] that they therefore lacked the capacity to enjoy life fully, and that they used pond water, considered to be unhygienic, for cooking. The idea of rice bowl water as a potential health threat was also voiced by respondents from other source areas, suggesting that people consider themselves to have a place where soil and water is suited to them (akin to the Tamil concept of *ur* [cf. Daniel 1984: ch. 2]).

Bagri men engage in seasonal petty trade across the Bhagirathi/Ganga selling, among other things, mangoes and date molasses; they also migrate

[16] The destination area is variously referred to by migrant workers as *bangla*, *rarh*, *pub*, *nabal*, or simply *bidesh*.

[17] In a village studied in the 1970s by John Harriss, stinginess was the subject of complaint by Tamil labourers, who used a discourse akin to Scott's notion of 'moral economy' to claim their patrons' support (Harriss 1994).

in tens of thousands to the rice bowl.[18] These migrations (and perhaps the porousness of the border with Bangladesh) create a sense of otherness in relation to the *rarh*, contributing to the reinforcement of sub-regional identity. Nevertheless relations between co-religionists may work against this othering and encourage the development of fictive kinship. Indeed, returning to his home village in *rarh*, Rafique was able to develop relations of familiarity with migrant workers from *bagri*, serving them during the *aman* rice harvest the kind and quantity of food they would expect at home.

At the same time, employers in the rice bowl—both Hindu and Muslim—mocked what they saw as *bagri* migrants' disdain for certain kinds of manual work, as though they had 'ideas above their stations'. One, in particular, suggested sarcastically that though they worked hard and for long hours, their choosiness about the work they do related to their connection to the former Nawabs of Bengal:[19] '*Nawab-er desh-er lok jharabe keno? Kete fele diye paliye asbe, taite dese dese firte hochchhe*' ('Why should people from the Nawab's country bother threshing the paddy? They just cut it and leave it—that's why they have to go from place to place [to work]').

Santal Parganas

Like Murshidabad district in relation to West Bengal, the Santal Parganas (in Jharkhand state), created by the British after the great Santal Hul (uprising) of 1855, also has an ambivalent identity in relation to the rest of Jharkhand state, due to its physical distinctiveness (hills, some of them forested, and undulating plains) and its high proportion of Santals. Communications with the rice bowl, particularly bus links, vary greatly, depending on which part of the sub-region people live in. The sub-region remains distinct not only for the large concentration of Santals,[20] but also for its lack of industry, relatively few mineral resources and the absence of railway connections.

The *lingua franca* in the countryside of Santal Parganas is Santali, spoken even by those of Bengali (and other) origins who reside there and work as traders, small shopkeepers, roadside café owners and

[18] Some of this lies within *bagri* areas of Nadia district.

[19] Migrants from *bagri* often refuse to thresh harvested paddy. Lalbagh, on the east bank of the Bhagirathi/Ganga, was the Nawab's capital

[20] In 1991, 41 per cent of the population of Dumka district were Santals (Government of India 1991)

moneylenders. But, although the Santali language has adopted some words from Hindi and Bengali, it is incomprehensible to most Hindi or Bengali speakers. Partly because of this, employers from the rice bowl—all Bengali speakers—sometimes send settled Santals (those who have stayed on in Barddhaman district after a period as seasonal migrants) as labour recruiters rather than going there themselves.

The rice bowl is known to migrants from Santal Parganas as 'Bangla'. For them the open plains of alluvial Bengal are foreign when compared to their own land. Language and landscape together contribute to this idea of otherness. Home or *disum* remains highly valued, especially by those Santals who have settled in the rice bowl. Such settlement is quite common, whereas settlement by migrants from *bagri* appears to be rare. For settlers and their children, maintaining the connection with the *disum* provides a kind of cultural capital in the otherwise alienating landscape of the rice bowl. Settlement in 'Bangla' also means an ambivalence about its otherness. Children of settled migrant agricultural workers grow up in Barddhaman with a strong idea of *disum*, but also with life experiences which make Barddhaman a very familiar place. Familiarity is also developed through long-term relations with employers who regularly recruit Santal workers from the same villages. As discussed earlier, this familiarity has bred a language of claims and expectations between workers and employers, thinner than, though resembling, patron-client relations within villages.

Puruliya

The landscape in the east of Puruliya district and the bordering blocks of Bankura is also undulating, and, as in the hillier and relatively more forested Santal Parganas, agriculture is mainly unirrigated. This region forms the western edge of the Chottanagpur plateau. The district of Puruliya has an ambivalent status in relation to its current parent state, West Bengal, and its previous one (until 1956) of Bihar. From the perspective of the rest of West Bengal south of the Farakka, and particularly from the perspective of the urban agglomeration around Kolkata, Puruliya is seen as a far-off place, tribal and exotic. It is also seen as economically very poor. *Jhumur* songs encountered in fieldwork in the Puruliya locality suggested that locals themselves share some of these images—of Puruliya as a poor, unwanted child of different states. Rather than casting Puruliya as merely exotic, however, it comes across in *jhumur* songs as being self-aware of having a strong and distinctive regional culture.

The Puruliya/Bankura border is much more mixed in terms of tribes and castes than either *bagri* or Santal Parganas. Puruliyans talk of going east (*pube jawa*), a decades-long practice which is largely related to economic necessity. Indeed Puruliyans are proud of their contribution to the development of infrastructure in the rice bowl: their immediate ancestors were the main labour force involved in building the canals which first brought reliable irrigation to rice production in Barddhaman district. So, although Barddhaman is 'other', it is also something produced by the labour of Puruliyan workers. *Pub* is seen as a place of plenty where farmers have become rich, and from where migrants return after the harvest with stories of gigantic rice silos (*morai*). Interactions with other workers as well as with employers in *pub* actively continue the process of constructing Puruliyan self-identifications.

Migration by wage workers of this part of Puruliya and Bankura districts is on a large scale, contributing to ideas about what is desirable in terms of consumption and employer-labour relations at home. Such ideas are likely to conflict with those of employers.[21] Like workers from the *bagri* sub-region, these workers (and those who decide not to join the migration) regard *pub* as dangerous. Water is considered polluted and unsafe, reflecting a connection to the soil and water of *desh*. They also fear the increased danger of snakebite, in one case noting how migrants from *bagri* harvested rice squatting and shuffling along, making themselves even more vulnerable to being bitten.

Purbi Singhbhum

South of Puruliya, the Chottanagpur plateau extends down into Purbi Singhbhum district, which became part of Bihar when Puruliya joined West Bengal in 1956, and is now a district of Jharkhand state. The subregion of which Purbi Singhbhum district is part is at the intersection of three states (West Bengal, Jharkhand—formerly Bihar—and Orissa). The language, though not officially recognised, is distinct from the dominant languages of all three states.

Migrant workers here have long been recruited to work in the West Bengal 'rice bowl'—formerly to Barddhaman district and now more commonly to the eastern parts of Medinipur district. However, unlike

[21] Cf. the Osellas' discussion (1996) of the meaning of Onam festival gifts; also the 'war of words and symbols between upper-caste, rich peasant cultivators and Paraiyan labourers' in John Harriss' study (1994: 187).

that from the other source areas, this migration has been in decline. On the West Bengal side of the border, this is due to a dramatic increase in irrigation, agricultural productivity and rural employment in the 1980s and 1990s (K. Rana 2000). These changes may be connected to the area's role in the Naxalite uprisings of the late 1960s which led to forced land redistribution. The new pattern of landholding was consolidated by the CPI(M)-led government from the late 1970s. During the Naxalite period, caste/class uprisings also took place on the Bihar side of the border, at times instigated by people of the formerly untouchable Mal caste (S. Rana 2000). The study locality, which is on the Bihar (now Jharkhand) side, is dominated by Mals.

Like Puruliya this is a multi-caste, multi-ethnic area. Again, like Puruliya, people here have a sense of being at the margins, despite (or perhaps because of) their proximity to the large industrial centre of Jamshedpur. Migrants and ex-migrants we spoke to stressed the differences between this part of Jharkhand and West Bengal. They explained that in West Bengal, because communists had long been in power, there was a greater possibility of institutionalised support in case of disputes with employers, whether over non-payment of wages or any form of harassment (see Rogaly et al. 2002).

Barddhaman

The people of the rice bowl itself, marked as 'other'—though not necessarily perjoratively—by migrants in all the migration streams discussed above, have their own sense of sub-regional identity. People in rural Barddhaman to the east of Panagarh are well aware that the district, and the areas immediately adjacent to it, have experienced a dramatic growth in crop intensity and productivity over the last thirty years, although Barddhaman was an important area of production long before the adoption of high yielding varieties and chemical inputs (Webster 1990: 178). As mentioned earlier, the district has a long history of communist party activism. Many West Bengal rural leaders began their political career in Barddhaman and the vast majority of adults are members of one or another of the CPI(M)'s grass-roots organisations.

It is the sense of being central to the rural and political development of the state which is important in the spatial identity of Barddhaman residents. This is the site of capitalist agriculture; the place where farming people have become rich, and where the richest among them have begun to invest in elite private education for their sons and daughters, as well

as in the best private health care available in the state. The richest farmers, including those who have been able to diversify (by investing in the trading of agricultural inputs as well as paddy, and even in rice mills and urban property) have consciously moved away from their identity as farmers or *chasis*, adopting life-styles akin to *babus*, who detest manual work. They employ managers (*gomostha*) to look after the farming activities, including the recruitment of labour, and concentrate on managing their overall business portfolios.

Within the destination sub-region there are important differences between those landowners who aspire to be *babus*, and those who are proud to produce with their own labour. There are also variations in the extent of *boro* paddy coverage and—importantly—between the twice-cropped rice monoculture of assured canal irrigation and a groundwater-irrigated rice-potato mix. However, seasonal migrants come to work in the rice fields throughout Barddhaman and their presence as visibly poorer 'others'—all of whom are even further removed from West Bengal's urban life than the employers themselves—increases those employers' sense of being from somewhere central and important. Here an ambivalence emerges among Barddhaman cultivators over their own identity: socially superior in relation to the Bengal hinterlands, but aspiring to an urban life-style away from agricultural production.

VI
Shifting ethnic affinities

Religion in particular, but also (non-) Bengaliness and caste/tribe identities are important aspects of people's life-worlds in the rice bowl. Seasonal migration of manual labour from what are seen as peripheral hinterlands is an arena of discursive contests over these identities.[22] For many people in West Bengal, self-identification begins with religion,[23] but this cannot

[22] We follow Okamura's concept of 'situational ethnicity' in spelling out a situation, in which ethnicity is important. 'Ethnicity is not always of ... decisive significance for social relations in all societies nor in all social situations within the same society' (1981: 454)

[23] Religious identification is especially important in West Bengal because of the two partitions (one reversed) of the 20th century, and the influx of Hindus from East Pakistan after the second Bengali, national identity has, *however*, historically cross-cut religious identification. This was manifest in the war for the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan and, less dramatically, in the maintenance of a regional literary and spoken language tradition within independent India

be separated from national and sub-national identities concerned with being Bengali (or not) and with belonging (or not) to a group categorised as tribal (the most important example in our study being the Santals). Similarly, as the self-perceptions of seasonal migrants reveal, the idea of caste among Hindus in Bengal is also connected to the notion of Bengaliness, drawing particularly on ideas emanating from the literature and songs of the Bengal renaissance.[24] These connections between identities concerned with religion, tribe, caste and Bengaliness are constructed and change, as we hope to illustrate, through the process of seasonal migration. In this section, ethnic groups refer to groups identified by themselves or others at the locality level or more widely as having a distinct religious, caste, tribe or national identity. Not surprisingly, group membership is contingent on spatial and social location and is not fixed.[25]

Religious identity cuts right across class and sub-region in West Bengal. Most notably, while the majority of migrant wage workers from *bagri* are Muslims, large numbers of rice bowl *employers*, though a minority, are also Muslim. Religion—Hinduism and Islam—varies in its importance in employer and worker identities. What is common, however, is the response of Muslims to the question *apni bangali* [implicit: *na musalman*]? 'are you Bengali [or Muslim]?'—*na, ami musalman*, 'no, I am Muslim'. This is in spite of the fact that taking West Bengal and Bangladesh together, the majority of Bengali speakers would be Muslim rather than Hindu. Thus in West Bengal, Bengaliness has come to be overdetermined by Hinduness.

For Muslim migrants from *bagri*, the experience of migration produces a sense of (their) alienation *as Muslims*. For instance, it is only this group of migrants who face regular *lathi* charges from the railway authorities at Katwa, the relentlessness of this (Rafique was himself caught up in at least one *lathi* charge during the research) contributing to Muslim

[24] Caste divisions in Bengal are unusual because they 'do not follow the "normal" fourfold division .. Bamuns are "close" to "clean Sudras" such as Vaidyas and Kayasthas' (Kohli 1997. 338). Bamun, Vaidya and Kayastha are usually referred to together as 'upper castes' in West Bengal. There is a 'growing tendency .. among the Bengali lower and middle caste people to compete with the upper caste people primarily in the field of education' (Halder 1994 72) In Barddhaman district, middle castes, with economic power derived from successful agricultural pursuits have also aspired to 'share political power to elevate their social status and prestige' (Ibid . 73). As a result 'the middle castes have emerged as a new power bloc in rural Bengal' (ibid.· 75)

[25] The 'situational ethnicity' approach referred to above (Okamura 1981). For example, a man identified as a Muslim in the labour marketplace may locate himself differently in relation to some of the other Muslims in his *locality*

labourers' perception of themselves as second-class citizens. Such perceptions are reinforced by the special rules in force in the *bagri* region for applying for ration cards (used for checking nationality), and in national and state level discourses on the threat posed by the infiltration of Muslims from Bangladesh.[26] Unlike these Muslim border-crossers, their Hindu counterparts are considered sympathetically, as legitimate refugees.

Even if they end up, as many do, working for Muslim employers, the interactions Muslim workers from *bagri* experience on the journey and during recruitment enhance their sense of belonging to the ethnic category of 'Muslim'.[27] Both Hindus and Muslims spoke coarsely about each other in their encounters during seasonal migration and recruitment: '*Musalmanra beiman*' ('Muslims are traitors'); '*Apnara dur theke bhat choriye dan ... kukurer mato*' ('Rice is thrown down when we are receiving food [from Hindu employers] as though we were dogs'). Among employers in the rice bowl, religious difference is stressed very strongly. Self-identification as Hindu in the all-Hindu destination study locality involved self as other in relation to the category of 'Muslim', Muslims being portrayed as violent, of low status and impure. This notion brought some unity and coherence to a locality also characterised by big-man competition over patronage and power. One employer, a former CPI(M) activist, explained that his father had moved to the Hindu dominated area following an inter-religious dispute: 'I have only one son; I won't keep him in a Muslim village.'

Some categorisation of Muslims by Hindus related directly to the pattern of employment of wage workers. Santal women, we were told in the entirely Hindu study locality, are employed by Muslims as sex workers as well as agricultural wage workers, and Santals are also said to enjoy beef in Muslim villages. Hence, now, some Hindu farmers have stopped employing Santals, assuming that they work predominantly for Muslim employers, though the actual employment pattern of Santal workers was harder to ascertain: for example, in another all-Muslim rice bowl locality,

[26] See also the arguments of Singh (2001), summarised above, on the creation of ethnic identities through feelings of relative deprivation.

[27] The history of Islam in Bengal is far more complex than the modern separation of 'Bengali' and 'Muslim' would suggest. Most of the first converts to Islam were 'tribal forest dwellers' who 'incorporated "Islamic" superhuman agencies into dynamic local cosmologies ... Islamic belief in Bengal was born of the interaction between two vigorous systems, so that by now it is impossible to extricate the "foreign" from the "indigenous" elements in popular rituals and beliefs' (Chatterji 1998: 278).

we were told that Santals had stopped migrating there and that local landowners now relied on fellow Muslims hired from the *bagri* stream.[28]

There is an important dynamic in the reproduction of a Hindu Bengali sense of nationhood based on language, (Hindu) religion and local manifestations of caste and tribal identities, all of which are reinforced by seasonal migration. Even in Puruliya, where there are very few Muslims, migration contributed to an 'othering' of Muslims—based on observations of the different work practices of the migrants. It is not clear whether these observations increased a sense of Bengaliness among low-caste migrants—Bauri, Mahato and Lohar—from the Puruliya study locality, but certainly, *within* the study locality, these groups thought of themselves as non-Bengali, the status of being Bengali being reserved for local Rajputs and Brahmins.

Santals generally see themselves as *hor* (persons) in contrast to all other groups, collectively referred to as *diku* (outsiders, literally, trouble-makers). For the Santals of Santal Parganas, the idea of a *Bangal diku* has special meaning, partly because of seasonal migration. While all Bengali *diku*s are seen as economically dominant, those who employ migrant workers in the West Bengal rice bowl are disliked less than the local (also Bengali) *diku*s who control the markets for agricultural inputs, including rented land, products and money. Interaction with Bengali-speakers (Hindu and Muslim) through seasonal migration increases the Santals' sense of themselves as a nation—a nationalism already uniquely acknowledged (following the Santal *hul* [uprising] in 1855) with the naming of the district as Santal Parganas.

In the Dumka study locality, the Santal stereotypes of *diku*s as cheats (*cati*) and deceivers (*ere*) were reserved for local *diku*s. These characterisations signal the value these Santals attach to honesty and open-heartedness. (For example, the Santals Rana worked with saw themselves as incapable of the craft required for deceit.) Conversely, *diku*s saw themselves in relation to the Santals as both clever and pure, while the Santals are fools who just like to booze.

In the two more socially heterogeneous source area study localities—in Purbi Singhbhum and Puruliya districts—caste relations were an important discursive site of struggle. In Purbi Singhbhum, the Benias tried to protect their sense of caste superiority by strictly observing untouchability in relation to both Mals and Sabars. This is especially

[28] Neither of these statements accorded with the data from Puruliya, where returning migrants told us there had been an increase in the employment of 'Bihari' (read Santal Parganas) migrants at Barddhaman

important to the Benias as several of the Mal households have become relatively rich.[29] Seasonal migration has been one of several routes to extra-local earnings, enabling Mals and Sabars to laugh off and even return the insults of the Benias (cf. the case of the Bhumihars in Jackson and Chattopadhyay 2000) who, unlike the former, would not migrate for manual work in eastern Medinipur or to the Barddhaman rice or brick fields.[30]

In Puruliya, migrant and would-be migrant workers belonged to lower Hindu castes, including Bauri, Lohar and Mahato. Mahatos have long had a reputation and self-image as skilled cultivators and have been politically prominent in the wider area due to their large numbers and extensive landholdings. They are relatively less dominant in the study locality because of the presence of the Rajput ex-zamindars, who continue to be the largest landowners. Bauris, on the other hand, have been regarded as the lowest of these low-caste groups and largely keep to themselves, only rarely migrating with members of other castes. Although local Bauris aspire to a higher standing, they do not explicitly seek 'Bengali' status—'eating like a Bengali', for example, could be legitimately mocked by other Bauris.

Bauris in the study locality have developed their own notions of social rank. Migration for brick kiln work and agriculture has enabled them to redefine relationships with their erstwhile bosses—the local ex-zamindars—expressed, for example, through the adoption of a less deferential behaviour. Higher castes in the locality rue the very ideologies of greater purity they struggle to retain through restricting their involvement in outside employment. There is a sense of envy of the lower castes—a sense that their material progress (minimal as it is) is undeserved. As one Bauri said: 'They do not like to see that we have two dishes to accompany our rice.' This process is akin to that described by Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan (2003) regarding the challenge to structures of dominance presented by changing consumption patterns.

While coming down to the plains (in the case of the migrants from Santal Parganas and Chottanagpur) or to the *rarh* (in the case of the Muslim migrants of Murshidabad) involved an experience of foreignness, it led to cultural interactions which otherwise would have been impossible, or at most sporadic. However, it is important to note that people who came from their own *desh* to this foreign place (*bidesh*) were not always

[29] Mals in turn see themselves as superior in social rank to Sabars.

[30] Benia men did migrate as travelling salesmen of medicinal plants.

complete strangers to it: they may have been there before; they may be related to someone who had done so; and they may have gone to specific employers or villages with which they were familiar. Migrant workers—and particular group leaders (in the streams from Santal Parganas, Puruliya and Purbi Singhbhum)—built up long-term relations with employers. Some Santals settled in Barddhaman, some Muslim migrants (and others) found Muslim employers (albeit with different spatial identities), and workers from Puruliya expressed familiarity with Barddhaman, for example, claiming that they or their ancestors had built some of the district's irrigation infrastructure.

In varying degrees in the different migration streams, there are both processes of othering and familiarisation in seasonal migration. Ethnic and spatial self-identifications became more clearly marked out through interaction with others. While greater mobility is, as Y. Singh (2001) has argued, associated with a hardening of spatial and ethnic self-identifications and categorisation of 'others', there is ambivalence too, as boundaries are crossed, food is exchanged and agreements and obligations extended over more than one season and sometimes over years.

VII
Conclusion

The rapid growth in the number of people migrating seasonally for agricultural work in West Bengal has followed the intensification of rice and other crop production over the last twenty years. This labour intensive process has meant a decline in long duration personalised relations in source areas, as workers have become less dependent on local patrons. However, it has not led to an organised rural working class movement. Although, soon after the Left Front government first came to power, 'rural struggles flared up in Midnapore and Burdwan for fair wages ... the lid was quickly put on after the first term was over' (Halder 1994: 63).

The mobility that has accompanied the emergence of capitalist production relations has also led to a strengthening of ethnic affinities. The mechanisms for this have included the interactions of work seekers and labour recruiters at marketplaces and in the villages of hinterland areas, as well as at destination work sites. Such affinities, emerging from common life experiences, are plural, changeable, and situationally specific. Self-identifications and categorisation of and by others are closely related processes. While ethnic and space-based affinities at the sub-national

and sub-regional level have grown stronger, there has also been a breaking down of cultural distance and a growing familiarisation between people from the hinterland and the people of the rice bowl. For some from the hinterland—for example, from Santal Parganas—this has been because of the settlement of relatives in the rice bowl. For others it has been about the development of fictive kinship—for example, for some migrants from the *bagri* region, the mutual obligations of patron-client relations.

Seasonal migration for rice work in Barddhaman, though liberating in some ways for some people some of the time, is gruelling and often degrading, and most people we spoke to would not do it if they had other economic choices. But part of the outcome of the migration is derived from the subjective experience, the meaning of being employed as a migrant worker. Ethnic identifications were used instrumentally to protect some Muslim migrants from the undignified living and employment arrangements they expected from Hindu cultivators. Elsewhere, two of us have explored how the meaning of migration varies for the same person, and how individuals experience ambivalence towards migration at a single point in time (see Rogaly and Coppard 2003).

Migrations are important in terms of how people think about who they are. This is so, even if, as in the present case, only a short time is spent away—up to about three weeks, perhaps four times a year. Part of this is to do with how encounters with places experienced as far from home change the ways in which identifications are made and remade in relation to the people and place called home. As we have seen, short encounters with *bidesh* bring about a greater affinity with *desh*, albeit ambivalent. While from the migrants' perspectives, *bidesh* has attractions in the form of more (but only relatively more) impersonal employer-labourer relations, more brick-built houses, greater mechanisation of agriculture, more bus and train routes, and is closer to the centre of power (in West Bengal at least) at Kolkata, these do not necessarily make *bidesh* desirable. There *is* desire for the money to be earned in *bidesh* and for consumption of those things available at marketplaces on the journey home, such as trinkets, kitchenware and tape-recorders. At the same time, there is repulsion from the rice bowl, as illustrated by tales of snakebites and unsafe drinking water.

People in the destination area think of themselves as socially superior to migrant workers who—with the exception of the workers from Murshidabad and other areas to the east—come from what they see as wild, *jangli* places. Yet many prosperous capitalist farmers in the destination villages were deeply dissatisfied with the prospects of continuing rurality.

They saw a desirable future in terms of formal education, accessing urban white-collar jobs and investing in property and business in nearby towns.

Identities are in flux in rural West Bengal and Jharkhand, and seasonal migration contributes to this process. When people move away from home to hire out labour or to recruit workers, identifications shift. As people interact with others from distant places, they move away from the narrower, within-group, identifications characteristic of village life. There is a growing sense of belonging to larger ethnic groups, associated with religion, caste, nation, and/or territory. At the same time, the interactions between employers and workers (and among workers), on journeys, at bus stands, and at workplaces, serve to raise the boundaries between such groups, consolidating broader ethnic affinities. These more widely recognisable identities then become resources deployed instrumentally in negotiations at labour marketplaces and in the rice fields.

REFERENCES

APPADURAI, A. 1989. Small-scale techniques and large-scale objectives *In* P Bardhan, ed , *Conversations between economists and anthropologists. Methodological issues in measuring economic change in rural India*, pp 250–82. Delhi Oxford University Press.

BANKS, M. 1996. *Ethnicity: Anthropological constructions* London and New York Routledge.

BARTH, F., ed 1969. *Ethnic groups and boundaries The social organisation of cultural difference* Bergen/London. Universitets Forlaget/George Allen and Unwin.

BAUDER, H 2001 Culture in the labour market: Segmentation theory and perspectives of place *Progress in human geography* 25, 1. 37–52.

BENTLEY, G C 1987. Ethnicity and practice *Comparative studies in society and history* 29, 1 24–55.

BOSE, S 1993. *Peasant labour and colonial capital: Rural Bengal since 1770. The new Cambridge history of India*, 3, 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BOYLE, P., K. HALFACREE and V. ROBINSON 1998. *Exploring contemporary migration.* Harlow, Essex: Longman.

CASANOVA, P G. 2001. Negotiated contradictions. *In* L Panitch and C. Leys, eds., *A world of contradictions: Socialist register 2002*, pp 265–74. London. The Merlin Press.

CHAMBERS, I. 1994. *Migrancy, culture, identity*. London: Routledge.

CHATTERJI, J. 1998. Bengali Muslims: A contradiction in terms? An overview of the debate on Bengali Muslim identity. *In* M. Hasan, ed , *Islam, communities and the nation*, pp. 265–82. New Delhi: Manohar.

——— 1999. The fashioning of a frontier: The Radcliffe Line and Bengal's border landscape, 1947–1952. *Modern Asian studies* 33, 1. 185–242.

CHOPRA, R. 1995. Maps of experience Narratives of migration in an Indian village. *Economic and political weekly* 30, 49: 3156–62.

CLIFFORD, J. 1992. Travelling culture. *In* L. Grossberg, C. Nelson and P. Treichler, eds., *Cultural studies*, pp. 96–116. London and New York: Routledge.

CORNELL, S. and D. HARTMANN. 1998. *Ethnicity and race: Making identities in a changing world*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge.

DANIEL, E.V. 1984. *Fluid signs: Being a person the Tamil way*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

GARDNER, K. 1995. *Global migrants, local lives: Travel and transformation in rural Bangladesh*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

GIDWANI, V.K. and K. SIVARAMAKRISHNAN. 2003. Circular migration and the spaces of cultural assertion. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, 1: 194–226.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA. 1991. *Census of India*. New Delhi.

HALDER, S. 1994. Caste-class situation in rural West Bengal. *In* K.L. Sharma, ed., *Caste and class in India*, pp. 63–80. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat.

HALL, S. 1990. Cultural identity and diaspora. *In* J. Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, culture, difference*, pp. 222–37. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

HARRISS, J. 1994. Between economism and post-modernism: Reflections on research on 'agrarian change' in India. *In* D. Booth, ed., *Rethinking social development: Theory, research and practice*, pp. 172–201. Harlow, Essex: Longman.

HOLMES, D. 1989. *Cultural disenchantments: Worker-peasantries in northeast Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

JACKSON, C. and M. CHATTOPADHYAY. 2000. Identities and livelihoods: Gender, ethnicity, and nature in a south Bihar village. *In* A. Agrawal and K. Sivaramakrishnan, eds., *Agrarian environments: Resources, representations, and rule in India*, pp. 147–69. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

JENKINS, R. 2000. Categorisation: Identity, social process and epistemology. *Current sociology*, 48, 3: 7–25.

KOHLI, A. 1997. From breakdown to order: West Bengal. *In* P. Chatterjee, ed., *State and politics in India*, pp. 336–66. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

OKAMURA, J. 1981. Situational ethnicity. *Ethnic and racial studies* 4, 4: 452–65.

OSELLA, F. and C. OSELLA. 1996. Articulation of physical and social bodies in Kerala. *Contributions to Indian sociology* (n.s.) 30, 1: 37–68.

RAHEJA, G.G. 1989. Centrality, mutuality and hierarchy: Shifting aspects of inter-caste relationships in north India. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 23, 1: 79–101.

RANA, K. 2000. *Gopiballavpur—anya mukh* (Bangla). Kolkata: mimeo.

RANA, S. 2000. *Changing class relations in rural West Bengal—Gopiballavpur experience*. Kolkata: mimeo.

RAWAL, V. 2001. Expansion of irrigation in West Bengal: Mid-1970s to mid-1990s. *Economic and political weekly* 36, 42: 4017–24.

REW, A. and J.R. CAMPBELL. 1999. The political economy of identity and affect. *In* J.R. Campbell and A. Rew, eds., *Identity and affect: Experience of identity in a globalising world*, pp. 1–36. London: Pluto Press.

ROGALY, B. 1994. Rural labour arrangements in West Bengal, India. Unpublished D. Phil thesis, University of Oxford.

———. 1999. Dangerous liaisons? Seasonal migration and agrarian change in West Bengal. *In* B. Rogaly, B. Harriss-White and S. Bose, eds., *Sonar Bangla? Agricultural growth and agrarian change in West Bengal and Bangladesh*, pp. 357–80. New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London: Sage Publications.

ROGALY, B., J BISWAS, D COPPARD, A RAFIQUE, K. RANA and A. SENGUPTA 2001 Seasonal migration, social change and migrants' rights. Lessons from West Bengal *Economic and political weekly* 36, 49 4547–59.

ROGALY, B and D COPPARD. 2003 'They used to go to eat, now they go to earn'· The changing meanings of seasonal migration from Puruliya district in West Bengal, India *Journal of agrarian change* 3, 3 395–433.

ROGALY, B , D. COPPARD, A. RAFIQUE, K RANA, A SENGUPTA and J BISWAS 2002. Seasonal migration and welfare/illfare in eastern India *Journal of development studies* 38, 5: 89–114.

RUDRA, A 1992 *Political economy of Indian agriculture* Calcutta· K.P Bagchi.

SAMUELS, F 2001. 'We Kaonde, we don't migrate'· The stretching of contemporary Kaonde life worlds between rural and urban. Unpublished D. Phil thesis, University of Sussex.

SCOTT, J 1990. *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. New Haven. Yale University Press.

SEN, A. 2001. Exclusion and inclusion Paper presented at the inaugural conference on Including the excluded', organised by South Asians for Human Rights, 12 November

SINGH, Y. 2001 Is globalisation a threat to regional and local identities? *In* I. Ahmed, P. Ghosh, and H. Reifeld, eds., *Pluralism and equality. Values in Indian society and politics*, pp 239–70. New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London. Sage Publications.

WEBSTER, N 1990 Agrarian relations in Burdwan district, West Bengal: From the economics of green revolution to the politics of panchayati raj *Journal of contemporary Asia* 20, 2· 177–211.

WILLIAMS, G 2001. Understanding 'political stability'. Party action and political discourse in West Bengal *Third world quarterly* 22, 4 603–22.

YOUNGE, G. 1999 *No place like home A black Briton's journey through the American south*. London Picador

Identities in motion: Social exchange networks and rural-urban migration in Bangladesh

Randall Kuhn

Expanding on work that demonstrates the importance of rural resources (land, manpower) on rural-urban migrant success in Bangladesh, the article incorporates the role of an expanding network of village-based social connections in perpetuating the flow of migration and ensuring migrant success. As kin groups, lineages, and entire villages shift from their home settings to major cities, identities that had little meaning in the local context are mobilised to create trust between past and future migrants. Identity-based migration opportunities function as a new source of capital in a society with severe constraints on formal credit and insurance markets, allowing small landholders to preserve their livelihood in exchange for allegiance to an increasingly influential group of urban gatekeepers. This fluid notion of identity often bends to more traditional social and economic concerns, however, generating a network whose membership is determined as much by pre-existing social relationships, spatial proximity and resource holdings, as by a potential migrant's skills, honesty or effort. These findings raise critical concerns over the inherent risks and social costs built into the rural-urban migration process.

Bangladesh is not a Europe. They are developed and we're a developing country. In our liberation, the boys of the town took shelter in their village. If they had no village land, where would they take shelter? So yes, the land has value.
(Salim Sarker, print shop owner, Dhaka)

For Salim Sarker, the devastation caused by Bangladesh's 1971 War of Liberation revealed the transcendent importance of rural land in the lives

Randall Kuhn is at the Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado at Boulder, 484 UCB, Boulder, CO 80309–0484, USA.

Acknowledgements: The author acknowledges the support and guidance provided by the staff of the Public Health Sciences Division and Urban Health Extension Project of ICDDR, B in Dhaka; the tireless work of the late Mr. Mahfuzur Rahman; commentary from Rachel Silvey and Jane Menken; and financial support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the J. William Fulbright (IIE) Grant, and the Social Science Research Council's International Pre-Dissertation Fellowship Program.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

of all urban Bangladeshis, as people of every social stratum found refuge in their native villages. Yet for most rural-urban migrants in Bangladesh, rural areas provide more than just a place of refuge, and their importance lies not merely in the land itself, but in the livelihood, the culture and the identity provided by the village. The decision to migrate is often guided by a desire to restore or replenish a family's agricultural tradition and resources, yet ironically the success of migration is often determined by the extent of a family's resources. And more often than not, the opportunity to migrate is determined by social linkages based in the village.

This article focuses upon the key role of these rural social links in migration, arguing that as the process of rural-urban migration intensifies, incorporating ever larger segments of the rural population, an individual or family's resource base and identity depend less on the security of landownership, and more on the security afforded by rural-urban social support relationships. As kin groups, lineages and entire villages shift from their home settings to major cities, identities that had little meaning in the local context are mobilised to foster new and important relationships (Rogaly et al., this volume). Migration emerges as a source of credit and insurance alongside more traditional arrangements of informal credit and exchange.

The article also demonstrates how emergent notions of identity can readily bend to more immediate social or economic concerns in the process of network inclusion. While networks function as a form of credit for potential migrants, they also serve the needs of urban gatekeepers, who must weigh the likelihood of successful urban adaptation in their decision to offer support. This places the gatekeeper in the all too familiar role of patron, with a modernist twist: not only are urban-rural exchange networks more complex and risky than the strictly rural networks that preceded them, but education, global knowledge and other forms of human capital have joined the levers of agrarian power (land, lineage) as a currency of patronage. The complex and potentially exclusionary nature of this process raises critical concerns over the all too common role of high-risk behaviours such as migration as the lone doorways to modernisation (Castells 1996).

I
Migration, agriculture and exchange

With the social, demographic and economic changes of the post-liberation era, migration in Bangladesh has developed a momentum of its own,

penetrating every social stratum and most geographic regions. The expansion of the migration process can be characterised by two waves of rural-urban migration. In the first, households with insecure or threatened rural livelihoods use migration, particularly individual and circular moves, to supplement and enhance income from rural economic activities (Kuhn 2000; Nabi 1984; Stark 1991, for theory). In the second, households with devastated rural livelihoods use migration, particularly permanent family moves, to find new sources of income and security (Roy et al. 1992). Let us examine these two waves in more detail.

Individual migration—The first wave of rural-urban labour migrants

Between 1971 and 1996, the proportion of Bangladesh's population living in cities grew from 7.6 per cent to 18.0 per cent, yet even the latter figure was the lowest among the ten largest Asian nations (United Nations 1995, 1996). The trend towards urbanisation reflects a gradual process of rural livelihood diversification and expansion in which migration is largely intended to offset changes in the context of agricultural production (Ellis 1998). Rising population density, proportional inheritance rules and highly liquid land markets have rendered the average agricultural plot insufficient even for subsistence production (Momin 1992; van Schendel and Faraizi 1984).[1] Declining access to patronage and common property arrangements have commodified access to the means of production (Caldwell et al. 1988; Das Gupta 1987; Roy et al. 1992). Yet few formal mechanisms have been introduced to address agriculturists' unmet need for credit, or for insurance against crop failures and price fluctuations.

In the absence of government or corporate institutions for addressing these constraints, households employ a complex set of social support relationships with close kin, often those living in the *bari*, or residential compound (Jahangir 1979; Jensen 1987; van Schendel 1981). In particular, these arrangements are important for small landowners: large landowners can use their own resources in lieu of debt, while the landless have less need for agricultural capital or insurance. In acquiring seeds for production or in financing consumption during the peak of the rainy season, small landholders and sharecroppers incur informal debt in terms of high pre-harvest paddy prices, making repayment in terms of the lower,

[1] Households are considered 'functionally landless', or unable to produce sufficient rice for household consumption, if they hold less than half an acre of agricultural land.

post-harvest price (Jahangir 1979; Jensen 1987).[2] Informal loans present an opportunity for 'strong', or upwardly mobile households to offer credit to 'vulnerable', or downwardly mobile households. Accumulated debts, especially during consecutive years of hardship, leave a shadow of default, mortgage and liquidation over many vulnerable households.

Taken in this context, rural-urban migration allows potentially vulnerable households to avoid the debt cycle at its onset, using migrant remittances to finance agricultural activities, supplement agricultural income, and shelter the household against short-term economic crises (Afsar 1994; Kuhn 1999; Stark 1991). *Individual migration*, or the migration of a single member of a larger family, facilitates these goals: reduction in rural labour supply is minimal, while consumption at the higher urban cost of living can be held to a minimum (Meillassoux 1972). Gardner (1995) discusses this process in the context of international migration from Sylhet, demonstrating the low likelihood of long-term retention of agricultural assets among households with no experience of overseas migration.

The most prominent rural-urban migration flows involve movement from areas along the Meghna River Basin in southern Bangladesh, such as Comilla, Noakhali, Barisal and Faridpur districts, to large cities such as Dhaka (Nabi 1992). Demand for migrant remittances in these rural areas is driven by high rates of *land-ownership*, and thus a high proportion of households investing in agriculture, coupled with declines in the size of those holdings, which reduce profitability (Cain 1983). Matlab Thana, the rural area of primary focus, is located within the historic borders of Comilla district, about six hours from Dhaka and Chittagong by launch or bus. Between 1982 and 1996, rural-urban out-migration rates of up to 3 per cent per year reversed 40 per cent of the substantial population growth that would have resulted from Matlab's high fertility and low mortality rates (Kuhn 2000).[3]

[2] If loans are taken during the planting season, then a 25 per cent price premium over post-harvest prices and a six-month loan period generates an annualised interest rate of 50 per cent, which compares somewhat favourably with rates offered by moneylenders and NGOs. If loans are taken during the middle of the growing season, then a 50 per cent price premium and a three-month loan period generates an interest rate of 200 per cent. As prices rise and time to harvest declines, the underlying interest rate rises rapidly, although information about the likelihood of crop failure and subsequent default also becomes better.

[3] Descriptive data on migration and return migration from Matlab are based on analysis of the International Center for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh's (ICDDR, B) Demographic Surveillance System, which has collected monthly vital events from most

In areas such as Matlab, Comilla and Noakhali, relative proximity to major urban destinations (about six to eight hours to Dhaka, versus twenty to twenty-five hours for other high out-migration areas) facilitates temporary and individual migration by allowing migrants to simultaneously participate in rural and urban life (Lucas 2000). A look at Matlab's age-sex distribution in 1996 demonstrates the extent to which this process is dominated by male individual migration (Mostafa et al. 1998). While the ratio of males to females stands at 1.08 for the 10–14 and 15–19 age groups, it drops to 0.95 for ages 20–24, 0.78 for 25–29, and 0.79 for 30–34.[4] The pattern of return migration in Matlab reflects not just the tendency for many migrants to fail and quickly return home, but also the gradual return of many migrants after years of urban residence. Among all recorded instances of married male out-migration from Matlab between 1982 and 1984, 65 per cent had re-established residence in Matlab by the end of a twelve-year follow-up period. Among those instances in which the migrant remained in the city for four uninterrupted years, 40 per cent eventually re-established residence in Matlab (Kuhn 1999).

Return migration is only the end result of a lengthy process of urban-rural exchange whose primary goal is the introduction of remittance income into the rural household. Among a random sample of Matlab residents aged fifty-plus in 1996, 18 per cent of all household income and 27 per cent of migrant-sending households' income derived from net remittances (both urban-rural and international), while one-quarter of all such households received at least 50 per cent of their net household income from remittances (Kuhn 2001a). While international remittances provided more income in total, a far greater proportion of respondents received some income from urban-rural remittances. Here then, migrant remittances, and the ability to secure future benefits through their expenditure, form the basis of a process of urban-rural exchange that aligns the economic goals of migrants and their origin households.

Family migration—The second wave of rural-urban migrants

United Nations (1996) medium-level growth projections anticipate 41 per cent of Bangladesh's population living in cities in 2030, making the Bangladeshi population more urban than that of a number of wealthier

of Matlab's residents since 1966. Migration is defined as any move of greater than six months; urban migration includes any move to a major city or a district headquarters.

[4] The human sex ratio at birth is 1.06 males per female. Among these cohorts, higher female childhood mortality should generate a higher sex ratio.

Asian nations (e.g., Thailand, India, China). This second wave of urbanisation cannot be explained merely by the increased practice of individual migration or by lengthier episodes of temporary urban migration. Instead, an increasing number of migrant families are forming permanent households in urban areas. Some of these permanent urban settlers represent the most successful of the first wave of migrants: with substantial incomes, job related benefits, pensions and permanent urban housing, they can remain in the city without depending on rural resources. A more significant force behind the second wave, however, is a further deterioration of rural livelihood and security (Gardner 1995; Kuhn 1999; Lipton 1980; Unnithan-Kumar, this volume).

While individual migration satisfies the needs of households that can find greater income and security from a combination of rural and urban economic activities than from rural activities alone, it provides little benefit to households that derive almost no income or security from rurally based physical assets, kin-based financial support or patronage. For members of these households, the dwindling benefits of low rural consumption prices and informal rural exchange are overwhelmed by the costs, both personal and financial, of trying to move between rural and urban areas. Rather than making a gradual transition to urban economic activity as temporary labourers in support of a rural household, family migrants make an immediate transition to the city as economic producers, consumers and permanent residents (Roy et al. 1992; Unnithan-Kumar, this volume).[5] In contrast to the high likelihood of return migration for male individual migrants after four years of urban residence (42 per cent, see above), only 16 per cent of family migration episodes from the same study resulted in return migration.

Loss of livelihood results not merely from landlessness or the loss of land, but from a more comprehensive inability to manage risk due to isolation from traditional rural security arrangements such as sharecropping, labour preference, informal credit, and common property (Das Gupta 1987). This sort of isolation can stem from a complex array of intended and unintended circumstances: spatial isolation; kinship connections only to households with similar economic backgrounds; insufficient financial collateral or credibility; political conflicts or vendettas; and overt discrimination. In an analysis of the impact of the 1988 flood on migration, it was seen that widespread increases in the practice of family

[5] In the analysis of surveillance data, family migration is recorded when a married man and woman from the same household move to an urban area (major city, district headquarters) on the same day.

migration in Matlab occurred not among landed households who suffered property damage and loss, but among previously landless households who could not manage the lingering effects of labour market disruption, price fluctuations, and increased competition for formal and informal credit (Kuhn 2000).

Unlike individual migration, family migration is in many ways defined by the weakness of urban-rural ties. In the first instance, family migrants have little incentive to maintain a social or economic presence in the rural area: pre-existing social and financial resources offer little in return, and few family members remain in the rural area to conduct ongoing exchange. More importantly, family migrants must focus their economic and social efforts on building strictly urban support linkages to substitute the loss of rural support, often in the context of an urban slum. The scope of these efforts is likely not only to limit the time and money available for travelling to the rural area or making contact with villagers living in the city, but it may also limit the budget for urban-rural remittances that could otherwise be shared with urban friends or neighbours. In an analysis of remittances received by older Matlab residents, children who lived with their families in the city were significantly less likely to send any remittances, and their remittances were of significantly lower value.

Incorporating migrant networks into social exchange

Although individual migration allows some households to avoid the inequitable terms of informal credit relationships, both sources of credit are acquired through a broader set of village-based relationships (Gardner 1995; van Schendel 1981; White 1992). In both cases, while money or resources are more likely to be exchanged by immediate family members or members of the same *bari*, the success of the exchange depends on encompassing networks of support and exchange at the level of community, ethnicity or identity (Taylor 1986; Winters et al. 2001). Direct exchange relationships draw structure and consent from horizontal linkages between members of a *gusti* (a patrilineage), whose primary goal is to maintain prestige and lineal claims, and a *samaj* (the village society), which administers justice and settles rival claims. They are also subject to vertical linkages to wealthy patrons or political leaders, who may or may not be part of the *gusti* (Jahangir 1979; Jensen 1987). Within each of these groups, the success of shared economic goals hinges on the strength of shared identity in the face of alternate opportunities, the

density of overlapping exchange relationships within the group, and the level of resources and opportunities that link members of the group.

This characterisation illustrates a complex pattern of economic stability and realignment in rural areas that has led ethnographers to simultaneously characterise village economic life in terms of class-based oppression, patron-client privilege, and cyclical kulakism (Bertocci 1972; van Schendel 1981; Wood 1980). This confusion is explained by White's notion of clusters:

> The cluster does not represent a new social unit, rather there is a tendency for clustering: for multiple links to compound already existing relationships. The cluster is neither exhaustive nor exclusive: depending on the definition, any number of households could be identified as within the orbit of a particular cluster .... The number of households and density of clustering depends in large part on the richest household's need for or ability to support others, but of course also includes horizontal linkages between households of a similar class. Links are of 'customary' form—they last longer than any particular contract (White 1992: 38).

The structure of social and economic mobility is not defined by any particular form of group solidarity, but by the overall flexibility of within- and between-group relationships to bend to any viable axis of social solidarity (class, gender, ethnicity, lineage, patronage).

As White's synthesis suggests, a patron's power to trump the interests of less powerful households does not carry a weight of its own; it merely acts as a gravitational field that draws support and allegiance through a mix of power and exchange. Patrons or leaders of the *samaj* can use economic, political or physical force to overwhelm others' ambitions, yet even their power is checked by the desire to retain political support and labour solidarity from a large network of households (White 1992). A disproportionate exercise of power introduces both the risk of losing ground to other patrons, as well as the potential for external threats to the very power of patronage such as the emergence of a true class consciousness.

Rural-urban migration, and the emergence of successful migrants as gatekeepers to migration opportunities, represents another such threat to patronage. The addition of a migrant gatekeeper, who need not have a history of offering patronage, transforms the rules of White's flexible construction of identity by creating a new source of power and identity

in the village context. The basic trade-off involved in identity-based migration is introduced in the context of a classic study of immigrant enclave formation among Cuban immigrants to Miami:

> Ethnic ties suffuse an otherwise 'bare' class relationship with a sense of collective purpose in contrast to the outside. But the utilization of ethnic solidarity in lieu of enforced discipline in the workplace also entails reciprocal obligations. If employers can profit from the willing self-exploitation of fellow immigrants, they are also obliged to reserve for them those supervisory positions that open in their firms, to train them in trade skills, and to support their eventual move into self-employment (Portes and Bach 1985: 343).

A shared identity or locality may encourage new migrants to make concessions regarding salary and benefits that facilitate the operation of small-scale urban businesses in return for long-term opportunities to accumulate human capital (Castells 1996; Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994). In this way, a notion of shared village identity becomes yet another axis of solidarity that competes with class, gender, religion, etc. (Portes and Walton 1981). New migrants contribute to a pool of people sharing social contact, cultural identity, economic support, physical protection, and political affiliation in the destination area (Portes 1996).

Not only does rural-urban migration increase the scale and complexity of village power formation, but it also alters the rules of exchange in ways that may further dampen the power of traditional patrons. Power dynamics grow to reflect the urban emphasis on accumulation of corporate, intellectual and modernist credibility over the rural emphasis on land and the means of production (Banerjee and Munshi 2000; Caldwell et al. 1988; Chari 2000; De Neve, this volume). Whereas the structure of returns to any new rural innovation (such as the irrigation project in White's book) are likely to mesh well with the existing activity and skill set of the traditional rural patron, the transition to the role of urban gatekeeper may be far better suited to landed peasants who had more to gain from migration at an early stage in the process (Chari 2000; De Neve, this volume; Hazell and Ramaswamy 1991).[6] For the ethnographer, this

[6] The role conflict between patron and gatekeeper may be even more contradictory in the context of rural-urban migration than in the context of Gardner's research on international migration from Sylhet (Gardner 1995). Access to international migration, particularly to guest worker destinations, depends far more on financial investments for visas, tickets, etc. Research in this and other settings has shown that returns to education

introduces a more complex set of unanticipated players and consequences; in essence, we have added not just a new actor (the gatekeeper) in a new gravitational field, we have added an entirely new form of gravity (modernity).

This new source of power and allegiance does not replace pre-existing sources of power and allegiance, however. As an activity designed to secure and expand existing rural activities, individual migration may draw households further into existing social networks. As an alternate source of credit for vulnerable households, individual migration also depends on a migrant's ability to make a successful contribution to the gatekeeper's own priorities. While their priorities may differ from those of traditional patrons, gatekeepers cannot ignore the continued importance of resources, pre-existing exchange relationships and lineal preferences as indicators of likely success.

II
Qualitative data collection and analysis

The current research presents the results of two qualitative studies which contribute to a larger quantitative/qualitative investigation of the social process of migration in Bangladesh.[7] The larger of the two qualitative projects, carried out in 1998, traces the social and economic process of migration from Matlab to urban areas of Bangladesh. By collecting linked in-depth interviews in origin and destination areas, the study details the forms of economic and social exchange that facilitate migration, as well as migration's impact on economic development, risk diversification and power formation. The use of a matched origin-destination study design facilitated the collection of such data.

Using location and background data from the 1996 Matlab Health and Socioeconomic Survey (MHSS), a team of five interviewers approached a small sample of out-migrants from the Matlab Demographic Surveillance Area.[8] In February 1998, the team contacted respondents

---

are likely to be stronger for rural-urban migrants, who enter all economic sectors, than for international migrants, who frequently enter manual or informal sectors (Kuhn 2000; Massey and Espinosa 1997).

[7] The current results may be best appreciated in tandem with a forthcoming analysis of the effects of past migration, at the village- and *bari*-level, on subsequent migration (Kuhn 2001b).

[8] The MHSS is the first round of a panel survey of family economics and adult health, funded by the National Institute of Aging, and collected in the Matlab

from twenty-one of the 200 Dhaka-based households in the 1996 survey, initiating a study of the four communities from which these migrants originated. Five interviewers (four male, one female) conducted interviews in *Bangla* and translated texts into English, utilising their own notes and personal memory of the interview.

In the rural phase of the project, interviewers spoke to the household head and any return migrants from the origin household of the original sample of migrants. The heart of the social exchange analysis comes from interviews with a purposive sample of households in social and spatial proximity to the original households, talking to return migrants, seasonal migrants, heads of other households that had sent migrants, and heads of households that had sent no migrants. This sample ensured representation of households living in close geographic proximity, but not necessarily functioning in the same social cluster.

The second urban phase completed the picture of rural-urban linkages, as interviewers spoke to out-migrants from households in the rural purposive sample and an additional sample of family migrants. These interviews were conducted in Dhaka as well as some common small-city destinations such as Narayanganj (industrial town near Dhaka) and Chandpur (minor port and district headquarters for Matlab). The rural interview process raised concerns about the difficulty of tracking family migrants and the clusters they had left behind; this came as no surprise, given the spatial and social exclusion inherent in the process. While interviewers eventually found several rural clusters of high family migrant activity, weak urban-rural ties among this group made it impossible to track more than a few family migrants in the final urban sample. In order to address this gap, a supplementary module included interviews with seventeen migrants living in slums near the Buriganga river in Dhaka.

Additional qualitative data come from a set of exploratory qualitative interviews collected personally in 1996 with the help of an interpreter. This project initially focused on remittance behaviour, but developed into a more general study of social and economic life in an informal industrial production enclave. We collected thirty-four interviews, focusing on the dormitory of one of the larger factories in the area. All employees of the factory as well as a number of small producers in the district originated from the village of the factory owner, in the southern district of Madaripur.

Demographic Surveillance Area in 1996 by a team from RAND, ICDDR,B, University of Pennsylvania, University of Colorado, and Mitra and Associates.

III
The formation and expansion of migrant social networks

Migrant connections, particularly those pertaining to employment and housing, are often attained through the same close patrilineal kin relationships that define strictly-rural exchange. Most respondents in the qualitative study, however, had also utilised collateral, marital, or affinal connections as well. This section will detail the role of such extended relationships for two major purposes. First, migrants who have a patrilineal source of employment and housing may continue to depend on extended linkages as a further outlet for security and advancement. Second, extended relationships are essential for bringing urban employment opportunities into social clusters that have little prior migration experience.

As we will see below, however, the definitions of words such as 'kin', 'neighbours' or even of 'family' or 'brothers' can expand both with incoming migrants' demand for opportunity and with the extent of the existing migrant's social influence. Economic exchange is described as *identity*-based when trust is based more on a shared spatial or social origin than any direct social linkages. In the presence of extreme competition, potential migrants are able to use their identity, in terms of region, village or *gusti*, as a calling card. Our respondent Salim Sarker discusses this process in assessing the employment prospects of young, educated migrants:

> Q: Do you think that social relations or kinship are important to get a job in our country? Is it greater in the village or in the town?
> A: There are lots of unemployed persons. When for 100 posts the applications are 100,000, then how is it possible without great scrutiny? All of them have written skills. At that time personal image has an effect. In Bangladesh, those who take interviews and those who are interviewed are all Bangladeshi. And within this, some may have kinship relations. So someone can request for his candidates. In the rural areas there are no job opportunities, so it is not important there.

Salim makes two crucial points here. First, while your Bangladeshi identity might hold currency in other countries, it does nothing to distinguish you in Bangladesh itself. Second, the fact that you were born in his village of Shahjahanpur would not distinguish you as long as you both remained

in Shahjahanpur. The fact that you come from *Prodhan Para* might be distinctive within Shahjahanpur itself, but its value is confined to the relatively low stakes of exclusively village-based competition.

In the context of rapid urbanisation, incoming migrants face uncertainty in job and housing markets, while past migrants face uncertainty in their economic and social transactions with people from a sudden diversity of backgrounds. Assuming that workers or associates from different regions are roughly similar in skill and quality, then the implicit trust of a shared identity reduces one element of uncertainty in the competitive urban landscape.

In rural Bangladesh, a potential migrant's most immediate connections come from within the boundaries of the *bari* or *gusti*. A typical story may involve a migrant uncle such as our respondent, Safiullah, who wished to compensate for an economic opportunity that his brothers could not undertake. In this case, he helped his nephew, Nasser, move to the city.

> Q: Did other members of your household migrate before you did?
> A: Before I moved to Dhaka, I lived in a joint family that consisted of my father's and uncle's nuclear households. From this family, only one of my uncles migrated before I migrated to the city.
> Q: Did you face any problem when you first came to Dhaka?
> A: No, I did not face any problem like housing, food, etc., when I arrived in the city. My uncle managed everything for me.
> Q: What assistance did you receive from him?
> A: I came to Dhaka and took shelter in his residence. I told him that I had lost my interest in getting education and requested that he manage a job for me. Then he contacted with his known teachers and requested for them to give me a job. They said that since he was known to them for many years, they trusted me as his kin, and they managed a job for me.

Nasser and Safiullah had actually shared assets and housing until only recently, and their households continued to maintain strong financial linkages. Having only young children at the time, Safiullah could afford to expend social capital on Nasser's behalf.

The exchange between Safiullah and Nasser is not very different from the patrilineal, intra-*gusti* forms of exchange that dominate the strictly rural context. Yet we only have to go a few years back, when migrant

networks in their particular *para* were not well developed, to see the role of marital, extra-local linkages in Safiullah's own move:

> Q: How and why did he give you the job?
> A: My father and his father took an oral agreement that they would give marriage of his sister with me and when I grew old enough to marry, the marriage took place. Then he was working in the city. After some months my mother-in-law requested him to manage a job for me in the city. As a result of his request he tried to give me a job and once he brought me to him in the city and managed a temporary job in the Dhaka University Club and after five to six years I managed a permanent job in the pharmacy department with the help of known teachers of the university.

Safiullah utilised an extended social linkage to gain a foothold, yet he used his own initiative to convert a temporary position to a permanent one. Years later, Nasser's search for a job would be aided not merely by his connection to a permanent employee, but by all of Safiullah's accumulated contacts within the university. Having already helped his brother gain employment in the university, Nasser may some day expect to bring more distant relatives there as well. More importantly, his connections could prove useful if his young son and daughter were to gain admission to the university itself.

Enhanced employment and housing prospects represent only one of the functions of urban social connections, particularly in the context of uncertain markets for permanent housing and employment. While a job offer from a well-placed relative offers the most important source of urban security, it may not afford short-term financial security, housing, job retention, or cultural assimilation. Conversely, a primary connection may only provide housing and contacts, while job acquisition and security depend on more distant linkages. Ultimately, secondary contacts offer security against unemployment and may point a migrant to opportunities for permanent urban settlement and housing. Manik, a migrant who recently joined a sweet factory in Dhaka, described the importance of such connections.

> Q: How did you contact them and know that they live in this particular mess [hostel]?
> A: Different people from different areas have a particular area to live in. There is a particular location, so we took shelter accordingly. Also

> I have other relatives here too, apart from the two people I know, so I took shelter here. It is an advantage.
> Q: What kind of advantage?
> A: Say you came to the office at first, you might face a lot of problems, like money problems and other problems which can be solved by them. You can get a family bond and also a cultural bond here, without asking for it, like your uncle and other relatives are close to you and you can get a village environment here. This is a very good thing.

The need to find an immediate set of friends and contacts enhances the already strong incentives for acquiring employment and housing through social connections. Expansion of this network, in turn, increases existing migrants' security and power within an institution or neighbourhood, as well as their ability to bring additional migrants to the city.

For business owners or managers, future migrants have a more direct economic impact. Migrants of shared identity are likely to be more loyal to the greater cause; they may be willing to exchange current earnings for future economic opportunities, and urban-rural linkages between the families of employer and employee may enforce continued employment and diligence. This practice is quite common for businesses and factories in Bangladesh, ranging from one-man hawker operations to publicly owned factories. Yet the economic benefits of forging identity-based power do not only accrue at the top of the hierarchy; the formation of this power base may well precede the formation or expansion of a business.

A series of qualitative interviews focused on employees of two guest houses in Gulshan, Dhaka's diplomatic enclave. The Royal Bengal Guest House was part of a chain of successful businesses whose owner was not from Matlab. Zaman had gained work experience in a number of jobs before a cousin, who worked as a driver at the Royal Bengal, connected him with the owner. Zaman quickly moved up from a supervisor's position to that of a manager, bringing at least seven people from his own village in Matlab to the Royal Bengal. The owner was happy to allow this: his own social and political concerns had by then transcended the activities of a small guest house. Zaman accumulated a number of resources that would soon prove important: knowledge of guest house management; connections with the local business and government authorities; savings from his work there; and a cadre of kin who were capable of working in the business. Zaman also had access to capital through contacts in the city, as well as a number of rural neighbours who needed a way to invest

income earned overseas. After six years at the Royal Bengal, Zaman opened the Shapla Guest House less than 1 kilometre away:

> Q: What was your final position in the Royal Bengal?
> A: I had been thinking for a long time about this, and I had a business partner. Also, I was a manager in the Royal Bengal and was able to save some money. When I was working there, I made plans with my partner. I opened this guest house while I was still the manager of the Royal Bengal. After the perfect establishment of this guest house, I left that job as manager. Now I am here as a partner of this guest house.
> Q: Did you hire your staff from Matlab?
> A: Most of my staff were hired from Matlab. Some of them had been in the Gulshan area from Matlab before. When I was the manager there [Royal Bengal] for ten years, they always asked me to give them workers for their guest houses. I usually managed them from my own village of Matlab—maybe my neighbours, relatives, etc. These were my known people. Out of sixteen workers now, twelve are from Matlab.

Zaman had leveraged a number of sources of financial and social capital, unique to his own origins and experience, into an economic opportunity.

In his case, encouragement of migration from his origin area began well before he experienced direct economic gain, but it would no doubt continue in subsequent years. If he were to expand his business, however, a number of factors might limit the direct benefit of the Shapla Guest House on the group that he currently defines as his neighbours. First, as his interests moved towards other businesses, human resources at the Shapla might enter the hands of a manager whose loyalties lay in a different (though perhaps overlapping) identity cluster. Second, as Zaman himself becomes more urban-oriented, his focus might shift toward relationships that are more cosmopolitan in their construction. As contact with his own *para* grows less frequent, he might come to redefine his roots more broadly in terms of Matlab, or Comilla district as a whole. Finally, demand for his assistance might decline once all eligible members of his identity group have gained access to migration. Zaman's economic progress and power, as well as his relationships with those who wield still greater power, continuously redefine his identity, and thus his zone of economic impact. Yet, as the next section will suggest, the distribution

of his ultimate influence within his own village will be neither random nor will it be primarily defined by spatial factors.

IV
The determinants of network inclusion/exclusion

Where the previous section addressed 'how' social networks form, this section expands on the question of 'who'. The results focus on the role of lineage and resources, characteristics that are often ascribed at birth, in conditioning the process of network inclusion. While gatekeepers may have a hierarchy of hiring preferences, extreme labour market competition allows many to satisfy all of their lineal, economic and identity-based preferences while still hiring someone with strong qualifications.

Lineage and existing social relationships

In moving from the limited space of rural patronage to the larger urban economic space, gatekeepers may gain an advantage over traditional patrons. The gatekeeper's role as urban employer can serve as a springboard for family members in the rural area to engage in more traditional rural patronage activities. In this sense, the individual migration process also benefits gatekeepers by allowing one member of a vulnerable household to work in the city at a low wage, while other members of the household continue to provide labour and allegiance in the rural area. Zaman's hiring practices at the Shapla Guest House offer insight into the role of existing social linkages:

> Q: How many from Matlab are in the Shapla now? How did you bring the people for work: from village or from Gulshan?
> A: When I move to my village, many people come to me with the request for his brother or son or one of his relatives to give him a job with their cv. From them, I bring the worker. I've given many people jobs in different guest houses. If I can start more guest houses in Dhaka, I shall be able to employ more people of my village there—and I will do so in such a situation. I have given many people jobs in Dhaka. They all love me very much.

When Zaman expresses a commitment to hire people from his village, he means something more specific than the politically defined village.

Zaman's village, like many in Bangladesh, has more than 5,000 people, preventing any small urban enterprise from generating a comprehensive economic impact. Our interviews in the village largely took place in two adjacent *paras*, one of which had a (relatively) elite history: a number of respondents had sent their children to universities, some had become professionals, others were making plans to migrate to the United States.[9] In comparison, Zaman's *para* remained more dependent on agriculture, urban domestic service jobs, and guest worker migration to the Middle East. Focus groups indicated that members of the more elite *para* viewed Zaman's neighbours as socially and culturally inferior. This view was expressed both by the truly elite members of this *para* as well as by agriculturists who were several generations removed from wealth or power.

While Zaman said he would hire as many villagers as he could, all of his past recruits had come exclusively from his own *para*. For vulnerable households in the elite *para*, access to this opportunity was limited by lineage and by existing social arrangements in the village in two ways. First, there is the role of inter-*para* rivalry and preference for one's own people. At another, more practical level, urban-rural social exchange with Zaman (and his family) would not be compatible with their existing *para*-based social linkages, which provide financial support, loans, sharecropping rights, etc. If employment at the Shapla Guest House were offered, the decision would be far more complex than a simple wage differential, as it might entail a realignment of all informal resource arrangements.

For the less educated or poorer members of an elite *para*, or a *para* dominated by one particular family, proximity to gatekeepers may be particularly unlikely to translate into migration opportunities. First, a powerful agrarian family may want to maintain a loyal network of agricultural labour and political support in the rural area. Second, well-placed government officials or professionals may be unwilling or unable to offer help that would be relevant to less educated neighbours. *Prodhan para* in Shahjahanpur village, referenced at the outset of the analysis, offers an example of a poor match between a particular form of migrant social capital and the pool of potential migrants. One of Salim Sarker's poorer neighbours, a landless labourer, discussed his efforts to secure employment for his sons through Salim's lone rural brother and his oldest urban brother:

[9] Although the nature of exchange in this village is again better characterised by White's use of the term 'cluster', respondents used the term *para*, neighbourhood, to refer to their own cluster as well as the other cluster.

> Q: Why could he not give [your son] a job?
> A: He said that he couldn't give a job without a matriculation [lower secondary diploma]. If one has completed matriculation then I can. I said to him, I could not make them educated. Because I had no ability. Again I said to him to find a job as a peon or the like. He said, 'I can't arrange a small posting. There are jobs for *peons*, but I can't give them to you.' If he would give a job in such low posting, it would hamper his prestige.

In the preceding case, an initial stream of out-migrants, largely composed of elites and their close kin, did not generate a more substantial migration process. Yet there is a precedent for wealthy out-migrants providing low-level employment to members of their *gusti*. Rahim, an urban respondent, had gained employment through a former neighbour, one of the wealthiest men in Bangladesh, in spite of only five years of schooling:

> Q: How did you find this job?
> A: Once, the owner of Sonargaon Engineering Works, who is from our own village, signed a contract with a businessman and rented a portion of his factory to them. They asked for two security guards, and Mr Nadir Uddin sent news to his elder brother in the village to find a good person. They knew about the character of almost all persons of the village. In the post of security guard, they needed a sincere and responsible person. They knew that my father was an honest man and he had liked my father. From our boyhood we managed our food by hard work and honesty. They considered that the son must be like his father and so they chose me for that post.

Employers may wish to hire within their *gusti* because of an established relationship of exchange and trust, but they may also do so in order to maintain their own status. Vulnerable households may choose family migration or women's labour market participation as solutions to an economic crisis, yet these idiosyncratic solutions might also reflect badly on the reputation of the entire *gusti*. Powerful members may prevent this by offering an urban job such as that of a security guard, which would provide a salary and individual housing for the migrant, while the rest of his family could remain in the rural area. Given their greater exposure to market pressures, large business owners may have greater incentive to preserve the status of their rural *gusti* than professionals or bureaucrats. Business owners may also have greater scope to allocate low-level employment opportunities.

As the preceding discussion and examples suggest, lineage or social cluster should be better predictors of identity construction and network formation than any spatial factors. Lineal preferences, as defined by powerful urban migrants, bring in opportunity in specific directions within a *para* or village. Even within the context of a specific *gusti*, potential migrants must seek out a meaningful basis for exchange with powerful migrants. If gatekeepers cannot satisfy their labour requirements within the lineage, collateral and marital linkages may instead bring opportunity to other villages or *paras*.

Resources and exchange

As previous sections have shown, not all urban social connections provide satisfactory employment and housing arrangements. Even those with post-secondary education *and* well-placed contacts may face periods of uncertainty during which they must bear a certain amount of risk themselves. In order to secure their own success, migrants must fall back on rural housing and economic activities, or on direct rural financial support. From the standpoint of urban supporters, providing assistance is futile if migrants are unable to expend resources to achieve their economic goals.

At the higher levels of the urban job market, migrants may conduct prolonged job searches and sustain long periods of unemployment. Lengthy job searches may force migrants to provide cash compensation for extended housing, secure their own housing, or return to their origin area while unemployed, as in the next case.

> Q: Would you describe the circumstances of your coming to Dhaka?
> A: I came to Dhaka first to my sister's husband house, who served in the Air Force. He asked me, 'what will you do now?' I requested him to manage a job for me. He told me that I had to know driving and brought me to a driving school. I got admitted to the school and needed six months to learn driving. Then I was unemployed; for some days I was in Dhaka, then I returned to our village to my origin household. I passed there for four or five years, and one day I saw a circular from Bangladesh Air Force for a new appointment. I applied and got the job in January 1986. I was unemployed for five or six years.

Dependent as he was on a single, non-lineal contact, this migrant's job acquisition process was quite arduous. Without the benefit of rural resources, he might have taken a lower quality job in the city or abandoned

his search entirely. More importantly, his brother-in-law may have been less apt to extend his hospitality and support to a marital relative who seemed unlikely to acquire significant employment. The respondent's rural resources allowed him to realise his own goals as well as justify his brother-in-law's efforts on his behalf.

In the preceding example, the parents' investment of rural resources in their son's lengthy job search resulted in more valuable remittances once he found employment. For rural households with far fewer resources, an extended period of support to migrant children is out of the question, and a bigger concern might be the speed at which the migrant could begin sending remittances. As discussed earlier, one of the primary direct benefits of identity-based hiring is an employer's ability to offer long-term human capital gains in return for short-term wage concessions. The next case follows the security guard Rahim, from the previous section, to an earlier time. Acting as the primary source of support for his wife, young child, and two parents, the human capital trade-off was not a suitable bargain:

> Q: Why did you return to your village?
> A: I had an uncle in the city. He brought me there and gave me a job in a textile mill as an apprentice. There I received only 250 taka per month. Then I told my uncle that it was not sufficient for me, because if I worked as a day labourer in the village I could get fifty or sixty taka per day. My uncle said that 'now you are working as an apprentice, so you get a low salary. But after you learn the skills, you will get a good salary.' But at the time I was the only wage-earning member of my household, so I could not wait for the time when my salary would increase. So after several months I returned to my origin village.

Rahim's calculation was correct given his circumstances, yet so was his uncle's. After two to three years of apprenticeship, his income would likely have approached 3,000 taka per month, or roughly double his estimated monthly earnings from agricultural labour. Given several years of experience and a moderate schedule of promotions, he could have eventually earned up to 5,000 taka per month, including retirement benefits, paid leave, and the opportunity to bring his own relatives into the mill.

From a practical standpoint, identity-based hiring can only extend to those kin or neighbours who are able to fulfil the obligations of urban-rural exchange. These obligations are primarily set by those already in

the city, particularly if they also play the role of employer. In the preceding case, Rahim's uncle hired him solely on the basis of a close familial relationship. In the end, however, his uncle's initial faith was not justified: Rahim's rural obligations made him unsuitable for a mill job. Not wishing to deviate too far from his business model in support of a member of his *gusti*, his uncle let him return home. Years later, after his parents had both died, Rahim was able to take the security guard position, which paid only a moderate salary but offered many benefits and did not entail any short-term wage concessions. Extraordinarily strong lineal ties to a highly developed migrant social network gave Rahim a second migration opportunity with more favourable terms, but most rural Bangladeshis are fortunate to receive even one such offer.

Resources strongly condition the operation of identity- or kin-based hiring practices, creating identity-based enclaves that surely do not represent the entire socio-economic range of the original identity group. In particular, a potential migrant's suitability for identity-based urban-rural exchange may depend upon his age and marital status, his parents' age, his origin household's composition, and their productive assets. Older, married migrants, particularly those with children or elderly parents, are likely to have more immediate financial needs, forcing them to remain in the rural area or to take jobs with immediate income returns. Migrant siblings, in addition to providing temporary support and housing, allow new migrants to delay their urban-rural remittance obligations into the future and focus on building their own resources. Rural assets not only provide a source of support and refuge in times of uncertainty or unemployment, they also strengthen economic and social ties between the migrant and origin family members through their commitment to shared resources. In some cases, resource constraints curtail access to migration networks; in other cases, they merely prevent migrants from achieving their goals.

Spatial isolation/family migration

Having looked at the reasons why some people may be unable to enter the migration network at their disposal, we now look at those who have no network access at all. While few sections of any migrant-sending village are without rural-urban migrants, many areas primarily send family migrants. Residents of these areas are constrained by the effects of spatial isolation as well as two further limits on inclusion into existing migrant networks or formation of alternate networks. First, the needs of

such households are incompatible with the urban-rural social exchange networks described in preceding sections. Second, past family migrants are unlikely to be able or willing to assist future migrants.

Spatial isolation may be responsible for much of the social isolation that produces family migration in a modernising environment, and the ecology and economy of isolated rural settings may place further limits on urban-rural exchange. In tracking a sample of family migrants, respondents were puzzled by initial questions about family migration from Matlab. Only those who were most likely to have interacted with every villager, such as shopkeepers and rickshaw-pullers, could remember most of the family migrants.

Indeed, many family migrants claimed to have no special bonds with people from their village; some expressed irritation with village society and people from their village for their failure to offer loans, assistance, or temporary housing. One vegetable seller, who lived in a slum along the river with her children and her brother's family, expressed her frustrations:

> Q: What kind of people come to Dhaka?
> A: The people in the village who had no home to live, no land to cultivate, no children to look after them, are coming to Dhaka. They had dreams that they could get something in the town. Even nobody would give alms in the village. They say, 'We can't afford ourselves, how can we help you?' But in the town, if we have two bites of food, we give one bite to other people if they want food from us, to reduce their hunger. In the village there is nobody to help people like this.

While family migrants may not have many social or lineal peers in their destination slums, they are likely to have many socio-economic peers: people who share a similar history of social exclusion and see an opportunity to form alternate exchange networks based on the informal resources available in a slum (Lomnitz 1977; Perlman 1976).

While rates of out-migration from spatially isolated sections of migrant-sending villages may be high, the nature of family migration leaves little opportunity or incentive for the formation of urban-rural exchange networks among family migrants from the same community. Family migrants may share a similar history with members of their own rural *para*, but the costs of continued urban-rural exchange (transport, communications, etc.) are high, and the benefits associated with encouraging future migration are low. Casual labourers or independent contractors (hawkers,

rickshaw pullers) have little power over labour arrangements, and have little to gain from encouraging their kin to join the same industry. The forms of training and assistance they might offer, such as training a rickshaw puller, are easily replaceable. Space constraints limit opportunities to provide extended housing to new migrants. While it is still important to enlarge and strengthen one's social network, particularly given the tenuous tenure status of many slums, this can just as easily be achieved within networks of urban-based contacts. High rates of migration between slums in Dhaka, as opposed to rural-to-slum migration, support the more significant role of urban-based linkages among these groups.

For many people living in villages with high out-migration rates, spatial proximity to strong urban-rural migrant social networks is largely irrelevant. As outsiders to pre-existing social arrangements, their neighbours show little interest in their economic situation while they remain in the village, and they have little memory of their presence once they have left. While high levels of past individual migration may predict the future practice of family migration, these processes would not be connected through a pathway of inclusion and support, but through one of exclusion and dislocation.

V
Conclusion—Micro/macro studies of identity and modernity

Urban-rural networks of social capital act as a form of credit, not merely as a resource that we can generically ascribe to all who live in its midst. Successful migration hinges not just on the existence of a network, but also on having a direct and meaningful connection to its source, and on having something to offer in return. Migrant gatekeepers act as brokers, offering credit in accordance with their own needs and the needs of layers of economic actors who wield yet more urban power. While their emergence at the expense of the traditional rural patron can be viewed as a partial victory for champions of cosmopolitan values such as education and human capital, it is a hollow victory that offers no particular insights into the future. As a process that is strongly conditioned by a mix of lineal preference, identity-based exchange, and economic practicality, rural-urban migration may break down some inequalities, but it is likely to reproduce many others and create still new forms of inequality (Gardner 1995). Perhaps the best that can be said is that the cleavages of social

stratification have become more complex and more malleable, offering additional loopholes and backdoors to economic success for the most energetic or lucky migrants (Castells 1996).

Policy-makers can write off the uncertainty inherent in international migration as an unfortunate side effect of globalisation, and one that is not without economic benefit (Massey and Espinosa 1997; Massey et al. 1998). Yet in the context of internal migration, the presence of such high levels of uncertainty merely looks like ineffectual or cynical development policy. Public sector infrastructural subsidies favour urban areas, building the inherent risks of migration into an individual or household's very private struggle to gain entry into the modern sector and manage risk in the traditional sector. Meanwhile, these same subsidies crowd out funding for the development of legitimate rural capital markets or new forms of rural livelihood.

More often than not, migration serves as a means to an end, and rarely as an end unto itself. Yet the high risk and the high social costs associated with migration often make it a circuitous and ineffective way to achieve goals that are better managed through better markets and policy.

REFERENCES

Afsar, R. 1994. Internal migration and women: An insight into causes, consequences and policy implications. *Bangladesh development studies* 22, 2 & 3: 217–43.

Banerjee, A. and K. Munshi. 2000. Networks, migration and investment: Insiders and outsiders in Tirupur's production cluster. Cambridge, Ma.: Department of Economics Working Paper Series, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Bertocci, P.J. 1972. Community structure and social rank in two villages in Bangladesh. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 6: 28–52.

Cain, M. 1983. Landlessness in India and Bangladesh: A critical review of national data sources. *Economic development and cultural change* 32, 1: 149–67.

Caldwell, J.C., P.H. Reddy and P. Caldwell. 1988. *The causes of demographic change: Experimental research in south India.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Castells, M. 1996. *The rise of the network society.* Volume I of *The information age: Economy, society and culture.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Chari, S. 2000. The agrarian origins of the knitwear industrial cluster in Tiruppur, India. *World development* 28, 3: 579–99.

Das Gupta, M. 1987. Informal security mechanisms and population retention in rural India. *Economic development and cultural change* 36, 1: 101–20.

Ellis, F. 1998. Household strategies and rural livelihood diversification. *Journal of developmental studies* 35, 1: 1–38.

Gardner, K. 1995. *Global migrants, local lives: Travel and transformation in rural Bangladesh.* Oxford: Clarendon Press

GEREFFI, G. and KORZENIEWICZ, eds. 1994. *Commodity chains and global capitalism.* Westport: Greenwood Press.

HAZELL, P.R. and C. RAMASWAMY. 1991. *The green revolution reconsidered: The impact of high-yielding rice varieties in south India.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

JAHANGIR, B.K. 1979. *Differentiation, polarization and confrontation in rural Bangladesh* Dhaka: Centre for Social Studies, University of Dhaka.

JENSEN, E.G. 1987. *Rural Bangladesh: Competition for scarce resources.* Dhaka University Press Limited.

KUHN, R 1999. The logic of letting go: Family and individual migration from rural Bangladesh. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, Graduate Group in Demography.

———. 2000. *The logic of letting go. Family and individual migration from rural Bangladesh.* Labour and Population Working Papers, RAND Corporation

———. 2001a. *Never far from home· Parental assets and migrant transfers in Matlab, Bangladesh.* Labour and Population Program Working Papers, RAND Corporation

———. 2001b. *Understanding the social process of migration in Bangladesh.* Salvador, Brazil: International Union for the Scientific Study of Population General Meeting.

LIPTON, M. 1980. Migration from rural areas of poor countries: The impact on rural productivity and income distribution *World development* 8, 1: 1–24.

LOMNITZ, L 1977. *Networks and marginality· Life in a Mexican shantytown* New York: Academic Press.

LUCAS, R.E.B. 2000. *The effects of proximity and transportation on developing country population migrations.* IED Discussion Papers: Boston University.

MASSEY, D S , J. ARANGO, G. HUGO, A. KOUAOUCI, A. PELLEGRINO and J.E. TAYLOR. 1998 *World in motion: Understanding international migration at the end of the millennium* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

MASSEY, D.S. and K. ESPINOSA 1997. What's driving Mexico-US migration· A theoretical, empirical and policy analysis. *American Journal of sociology* 102, 4: 939–99

MEILLASSOUX, C. 1972. From reproduction to production. *Economy and society* 1, 1: 93–105.

MOMIN, M.A. 1992. *Rural poverty and agrarian structure in Bangladesh.* New Delhi Vikas Publishing House

MOSTAFA, G , M.A. KASHEM SHAIKH, J.K. VAN GINNEKEN and A.M. SARDER 1998. Demographic surveillance system—Matlab, registration of demographic events, 1996, volume 28. Dhaka: ICDDR, B.

NABI, A.K.M.N. 1992. Dynamics of internal migration in Bangladesh. *Canadian studies in population* 19, 1: 81–98

NABI, I. 1984 Village-end considerations in rural-urban migration. *Journal of development economics* 14, 1 & 2: 129–45.

PERLMAN, J.E. 1976. *The myth of marginality. Urban poverty and politics in Rio de Janeiro.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

PORTES, A. 1996. Transnational communities Their emergence and significance in the contemporary world-system. *In* R.P. Korzeniewicz and W.C. Smith, eds., *Latin America in the world-economy*, pp. 151–68. London· Greenwood Press.

PORTES, A. and R.L. BACH. 1985. *Latin journey· Cuban and Mexican immigrants in the United States.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

PORTES, A. and J. WALTON. 1981. *Labour, class, and the international system.* New York: Academic Press.

Roy, K.C., C. Tisdell and M. Alauddin. 1992. Rural-urban migration and poverty in South Asia. *Journal of contemporary Asia* 22, 1: 57–72.

van Schendel, W. 1981. *Peasant mobility: The odds of life in rural Bangladesh.* Assen: van Gorcum.

van Schendel, W. and A.H. Faraizi. 1984. *Rural labourers in Bengal: 1880–1980.* Rotterdam: Comparative Asian Studies Program, Erasmus University.

Stark, O. 1991. *The migration of labour.* Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.

Taylor, J.E. 1986. Differential migration, networks, information, and risk. *In* O. Stark, ed., *Research in human capital and development: Migration, human capital, and development, volume 4*, pp. 147–71. Greenwich: JAI Press, Inc.

United Nations. 1995. *The challenge of urbanization: The world's largest cities.* New York: United Nations Secretariat, Population Division.

———. 1996. *World urbanization prospects: The 1996 revision.* New York: United Nations Secretariat, Population Division.

White, S.C. 1992. *Arguing with the crocodile: Gender and class in Bangladesh.* London: Zed Books.

Winters, P., A. De Janvry and E. Sadoulet. 2001. Family and community networks in Mexico-US Migration. *Journal of human resources* 36, 1: 159–83.

Wood, G.D. 1980. Class differentiation and power in Bandakgram: The minifundist case. *In* A. Huq, ed., *Exploitation and rural poor*, pp. 60–96. Comilla, Bangladesh: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development.

Social Movements, Old and New

A Post-modernist Critique

RAJENDRA SINGH

This important book is both about social movements and collective actions, and about the discipline of sociology and prevailing concepts of Indian society. Presenting a post-modernist critique of the study of social movements, Professor Rajendra Singh challenges the dominant view that these struggles are expressions of disruption and a breakdown of the established social order. He argues for the need for a post-sociology, based on broader perspectives drawn from all the social science disciplines, to fully grasp the realities of present-day Indian society.

The book is divided into two parts. The first deals with conceptual issues involved in articulating a generic perspective for an understanding of social movements. The author examines current theories relating to old and new social movements; highlights the conflictual and transformational matrix of Indian society; and discusses various dynamics such as the movement from modernity to post-modernity, from society to post-society, and from sociology to post-sociology.

In the second part, Professor Singh presents a conceptual critique of various studies on social movements including the neo-classical model, Marxist paradigms and historical approaches. He ends by presenting a unified perspective for an understanding of representations of society and social movements in the critical context of sociology.

CONTENTS: *Preface/Acknowledgements*/**PART I**/1. Introduction/2. Social Movements: A Generic Perspective/3. The Changing Representation of Society and Movements: From Modernity to Post-modernity, Society to Post-society and Sociology to Post-sociology/4. The Theory of Social Movements: 'Old' and 'New'/**PART II**/5. Paradigms of Movement Studies: 'Old' and 'New'/ 6. The Emerging Paradigm of New Social Movements in India/7. Themes in Studies of 'Old' and 'New' Social Movements in India/8. Conclusion: Society, Social Movements and Sociology/*Bibliography/Index/About the Author*

220 x 140mm/Hb/2001/360pp.

Sage Publications
New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

Circular migration and rural cosmopolitanism in India

Vinay Gidwani and K. Sivaramakrishnan

In this article we present a provisional theory of rural cosmopolitanism as a counterpoint to conventional discussions of cosmopolitanism and demonstrate its significance for studying South Asian modernities. We explore our ideas through the figure of the circular migrant: someone who transmits through movements in geographic space not just sensibilities and ideas, but also the materials and techniques that enable the transformation of social space in multiple worlds. The regionalisation of labour markets in India, with a consequent rise in labour circulation, provides empirical justification to our focus on circular migrants. But neither circular migration nor rural cosmopolitanism is a new phenomenon. Instead, we suggest that by probing the largely invisible histories of movement within South Asia, we may end up writing the rise of nationalisms, regional political movements, and modernities in that part of the world in very different ways. This is precisely why it is necessary to reject the figure of an international or transnational subject as the standard bearer of cosmopolitanism and realise that cosmopolitanism operates at various scales; and, equally, that the cosmopolitan is a person who disrupts conventional spatial divisions and produces newly salient spaces of work, pleasure, habitation and politics.

I
Introduction

Manavalan is a Branch Manager in the General Insurance Corporation's Nungambakkam office in Chennai. He enjoys the job security and the prospect of comfortable retirement benefits that are promised to a select

Vinay Gidwani is at the Department of Geography and Institute of Global Studies, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 414 Social Sciences Building, 267-19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA.

K. Sivaramakrishnan is at the Department of Anthropology and Center for South Asian Studies, University of Washington, Seattle, M-32, Denny Hall, Box 353100, Seattle, WA 98195, USA.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 1&2 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

minority of India's public sector employees.[1] Manavalan's secure economic position enables him to lead a life that straddles two cultural worlds: weekdays in Chennai, and most weekends at his village in Chengam taluk of Tiruvannamalai district, northern Tamil Nadu. In the last few years, these weekend visits have often been to supervise the mango orchards he planted on ancestral lands once cultivated for coarse grains and oilseeds. The conspicuous surge, over the past two decades, in areas under orchards in the dry plains of North Arcot (now Tiruvannamalai) reflects the growing population of relatively privileged 'cosmopolitans' like Manavalan, who reside in cities and feel 'at home' there, but, at the same time, continue also to be involved in the politics and culture of their villages of origin. Orchards become physical symbols of their continuing rural affinities, markers that they have established lives in other places without abandoning their inherited worlds. Equally important for circular migrants like Manavalan, orchards obviate the need to deal with indifferent tenants and recalcitrant farm workers. In Chennai, Manavalan experiences an elevated social standing by being known as an orchard owner.

Manavalan does not know, and probably would not care to recognise, the teenage girls who have come from a village close to his own to the peri-urban expanses of Chennai that are fast morphing from low suburbia into dense clusters of apartment buildings. This construction boom is a visible scar of the 'global' on the landscape of the 'local': its proximate

Acknowledgments: We are grateful to Katy Gardner, Filippo Osella and Ben Rogaly for their generous and precise comments on earlier drafts of this article. Versions of this article were presented at three different seminars. We thank participants at the Program in Agrarian Studies colloquium at Yale University (November 2001), particularly Arun Agrawal, Barney Bate, Michael Goldman, Bill Kelly, Rachel Schurman, Jim Scott, Aradhana Sharma, Helen Siu, Jessica Stites, Immanuel Wallerstein and Eric Worby; at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs seminar at Harvard University (April 2002), particularly Sugata Bose, Devesh Kapur and Mary Steedly; and at the Department of Geography, University of Minnesota, Friday Coffee Hour seminar (May 2002), particularly Bruce Braun, Francis Harvey, George Henderson and Karen Till. We express our gratitude to V. Arivudai Nambi and Muniappan for their advice and research assistance in Tiruvannamalai district, Tamil Nadu, in 1999, 2000 and 2001; and our thanks to the Faculty Grant-in-Aid, University of Minnesota and the Royalty Research Fund, University of Washington, for generous financial support. We would also like to acknowledge our students—Eugene Sherayzen in Minneapolis and Shara Svendsen in Seattle—for their library research on this project. Melissa Poe provided valuable editorial help on the final manuscript. The usual disclaimers apply.

[1] All names of persons used here are pseudonyms.

cause is the young, highly skilled, information technology workers who are using their rapidly rising incomes, frequently augmented by dollar earnings from contract assignments abroad, to acquire new apartments and homes. The growing population of these transnational cosmopolitans has engendered a demand for domestic workers, which includes the teenage girls who have come from a village near Manavalan's. The girls cook, clean, work as nannies, and run errands. They are, like Manavalan, and their white-collar employers, cosmopolitans—in that they straddle, with great facility (but considerably more hardship) two different cultural worlds. Unlike Manavalan and their employers, they inhabit a class habitus that is radically different. They neither have job security nor elevated social status; they are members of a vast 'footloose proletariat' (Breman 1996) who participate in circuits of circular migration in pursuit of precarious livelihoods.[2] They are, at least *initially* by necessity, 'plebeian cosmopolitans' who labour for 'patrician cosmopolitans' like the high-tech workers of Chennai or the Manavalans of this world, who are cosmopolitan less by necessity than by choice.

Our article is a preliminary meditation on rural cosmopolitanism and the transformation of 'social space', in Lefebvre's (1991: Ch. 2) sense—where social space is understood as a (historic) 'production' of the following triad: (*a*) routinised social relations of production and reproduction ('spatial practices'); (*b*) enacted conceptions of spatial environments and orders ('representations of space'); and (*c*) the lived spaces of everyday life with their (often tacit) symbolic associations and codings ('representational spaces'). For Lefebvre, the category 'spatial practices' includes, as part and parcel of the organisation of production and reproduction, the particular locations and built environments that give material context to these relations. Indeed, if there is one lesson to be taken away from Lefebvre's work, it is his insistence on the materiality of space (and, correspondingly, his disdain for purely ideographic invocations of space).

We focus, in this article, on the cosmopolitanism of circulating people like Manavalan and the teenage girls, whose social space of reproduction encompasses—and disrupts—the space of the conventionally 'urban' and 'rural'. Empirically, we have compelling reasons to study circular migration, a subset of labour circulation.[3] As Breman notes in the context

[2] Sivaramakrishnan, field notes, May–June 1999 and July 2001.

[3] In its widest sense, labour circulation is the movement of people whose livelihood strategies involve relocation, both periodic and permanent, but whose self-making strategies retain a significant involvement with places of origin, especially rural homelands. Within this broad category of circulation, we recognise that there can be important

of postcolonial India, 'rural-urban migration ... has accelerated during the last half-century', although—as the example of Manavalan underscores—'only a small minority of that army of migrants ... has found work in the formal sector of the economy' (1999: 409–10). Most informal workers seek their livelihoods in cities, but rural industrialisation has spread informal wage work into small towns and rural areas as well. Indeed, plantations, mines, quarries, brick kilns, and food-processing industries have historically commanded a strong rural presence and recruited mainly migrant labour. Hence, while 'labour nomadism is not a new phenomenon ... its magnitude and the distances workers cover have increased greatly over time' (ibid.: 416).[4]

Conceptually, as Gardner and Osella tell us in their introduction to this volume, to produce ethnographies of people on the move is to unsettle the certitudes of Modernity—its self-description as the harbinger of Reason, Truth and Progress (Rofel 1997); its attempted erasure of its 'provinciality' (Chakrabarty 2000) and 'heterogeneity' (Kahn 2001); the ultimately fragile warranties secured through its disciplinary (and disciplining) knowledges (Latour 1999; Osella and Osella, n.d.); and via its economic and political cornerstones—the nation-state (Spencer, this volume), modernisation (Ballard, Rogaly, Unnithan-Kumar, this volume) and secularism (Thangarajah, this volume). Ethnographies of migration can disrupt the notion of a 'singular Modernity'—the European ideals and institutions that are accorded the status of cross-cultural universals within classical social theory and academic disciplines—by revealing sharp regional variations among social practices that are self-identified as 'modern'. Far from rejecting the power and salience that the trope of being or becoming 'modern' commands in the autobiographies of individuals and communities, the essays in this collection instead reveal the disparate—sometimes altogether unexpected—invocations of the

---

differences. Seasonal migrants, who move frequently between village of origin and other rural or urban destinations need to be distinguished from other migrants who live in cities and foreign lands, returning occasionally or finally upon retirement to the village. To this it is possible to add a third category of commuters.

[4] More precise periodisations of the increase in quantum and scale of migration in India are hazardous and not necessarily instructive. But its precise relationship to the phenomenon discussed as 'globalisation' merits closer examination than we are able to do here. What can be noted is that the structural changes taking place in the Indian economy since the late 1980s have certainly had the impact of diminishing the capacity of state policy and local magnates to immobilise labour. In that respect the situation is analogous to the challenges posed to state control by the increased spatial mobility of people in China under conditions described as those of 'late socialism' (Zhang 2001).

'modern' (for instance, the adoption of Islamic orthodoxy as a sign of 'modernity' among the women migrants from Sri Lanka described by Thangarajah, and the Pakhtun migrants described by Watkins in this volume, or the Malay return migrants discussed in Kahn 2001: 654, fn. 5). In short, to critique Modernity through the lens of movement and migration is to 'question a pre-given world of separate and discrete "peoples and cultures" and see instead a difference-producing set of relations, ... [that is, to] turn from a project of juxtaposing pre-existing differences to one of exploring the construction of differences in historical process' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 46).

II
Movement, modernity, cosmopolitanism

In positing the somewhat paradoxical figure of the 'rural cosmopolitan', we bring this spirit of non-identification or relational critique to the concept of cosmopolitanism. Although the literature on cosmopolitanism is large and variegated (exemplars include Ferguson 1999; Hannerz 1996; Pollock et al. 2000; and Robbins 1999), it does share some common commitments: first, an emphasis on the cultural versatility of agents in different worlds; second, an emphasis on the spatial diffusion of ideas and values that undermine parochial (and by implication, local) concerns and orderings; and third, by inference, a geographic imagination secured by notions of discrete, self-evident places and subjects awaiting transformation through the cultivation of a universalist ethos or 'habit of mind' that would wean them away from the prejudices of the 'local' and the 'vernacular'. Here local/vernacular are marked as pejorative, while cosmopolitanism embodies in the person of the cosmopolitan the secular triumvirate of Reason, Truth and Progress and, through these instruments of Enlightenment, the cosmopolitan is able to supersede tradition and parochial solidarities—including nationalism. While there is much to recommend a critique of patriotism (for instance, Balibar 1991), ultimately we find this vision of cosmopolitanism flawed by its identitarian logic—the desire to demarcate the figure of the cosmopolitan by appeal to precisely the sort of ontologised differences that are so problematic within modernist anthropology, geography, or sociology, and the object of searching critique by various articles in this collection.

To put it baldly, while we share with the literature the idea of cosmopolitanism as participation by its carriers in multiple cultural worlds, with a sense of belonging and with a degree of adeptness in each, this does

not compensate for a host of lingering disaffections, which include: the tendency of the extant literature to anoint the nation-state as the modal referent for the practices of cosmopolitanism (which then valorises, by definition, trans- or post-national practices); the assertion that the political aims and effects of cosmopolitanism are invariably progressive; that cosmopolitanism is, foremost, a discursive sensibility; and, finally and most seriously, that there are distinct domains of those who are cosmopolitan and those not yet there. This last assumption, wittingly or unwittingly, taints the idea of cosmopolitanism with the dangerous pieties of modernisation theory—that people, places, and cultures exist at different stages of development, and those who are not cosmopolitan suffer from some sort of lack.

In this article we wish to fashion, provisionally, a theory of rural cosmopolitanism as a counterpoint to conventional discussions of cosmopolitanism, and demonstrate its significance for studying South Asian modernities. Ferguson, in his study of Zambian Copperbelt workers and their return migrations, exemplifies one strategy for situating cosmopolitanism that we find highly suggestive. His definition is succinct: 'given a set of localizing social pressures applied to urban Copperbelt dwellers by their rural allies, I call cosmopolitanism those stylistic modes that refuse or establish distance from those pressures' (1999: 211–12). From the localist perspective, then, what cosmopolitans (rich and poor alike) lack is humility and loyalty. Where localist style reassures, 'cosmopolitanism is a series of slaps in the face' (ibid.: 212).

There is much that we can learn from Ferguson's characteristically lucid account, and much to disagree with. To begin with, while we agree with Ferguson that cosmopolitanism unsettles familiar norms of social interaction, we do not view it as necessarily defiant or oppositional. Second, while we concede the importance of cultural style within a 'cosmopolitics', we claim that a cosmopolitics exceeds style alone. The application of 'technologies' that generate a cosmopolitics includes amendments to language, etiquette, body, demeanour, and modes of consumption; but, more broadly, it involves the transformation of social space in Lefebvre's triadic sense. Moreover, cosmopolitanism becomes significant to us within the context of labour circulation—it is not a matter of autarkic urban or rural styles; rather, cosmopolitanism codes for us the relation of difference (in terms of values, resources, life-styles, practices and imaginations) that circular migrants negotiate—on a continuing basis—when they move from the local to the non-local and back to the local. The non-local may be an urban setting or even an international

setting; but it could just as well be another rural setting (hence, our analysis does not exclude intra-rural circular migrants). With Piot (1999: 23–26) we share, additionally, the suspicion that cosmopolitanism has been too hastily linked with postmodernity, transnational flows, and the fluidity associated with post-Fordist globalisation.[5] Cosmopolitanism, we feel, should refer to a more general and historically deep experience of living in a state of flux, uncertainty, and encounter with difference that is possible in rural, urban, *or* metropolitan settings. Rural cosmopolitans, then, are those who originate in rural areas and who, having become bearers of cultural versatility, turn this to some advantage in either their rural source areas and/or their non-rural destinations. Note the logical implications of this understanding of cosmopolitanism: it obviates the need to think of cosmopolitanism in identitarian terms as an attribute—territorial or otherwise—of the modern/the urban/the privileged/the non-parochial; instead cosmopolitanism signifies the (often contested and uneven) traffic and transfer of *techne* between worlds joined in a relationship of difference, by privileged *or* subaltern groups.[6] This sort of border thinking is an ongoing process that transforms hermetic and depoliticised Difference into a *political relation* of difference. We are now able to restate our definition of cosmopolitanism: *it is that art of being which is able to straddle a political world of difference and deploy the technologies of one to some advantage in the other.* Whether or not the advantage thus gained serves a progressive agenda we leave indeterminate.

III
Rural cosmopolitanism within the nation

India has witnessed the unprecedented multiplication of rural-urban *and* rural-rural linkages in the past three decades, and this has caused the catchment area of workers to become regional in scale, rather than locally rural or urban. Many of these significant transformations are invisible in official statistics. Srivastava points out in the Indian context that official numbers such as Census and National Sample Survey (NSS) data tend

[5] Even otherwise astute scholars like Harvey (1989) and Appadurai (1996) reveal that they are not free of the assumptions that associate rurality with parochialism and cultural singularity. Their discussions of the conditions of postmodernity imply, almost exclusively, urban spaces and international processes.

[6] Hence, what is often derisively dismissed as vernacular—waiting to be transformed by an emancipating cosmopolitanism—is, in our view, an agent within the realm of rural cosmopolitics.

to 'underestimate population mobility and labour migration to a significant extent' (1998: 584). This happens because they rely on survey instruments that primarily cover permanent and semi-permanent migration and, far less effectively, short duration circular or seasonal migration. By contrast, micro-level studies of migration (Breman 1996; Breman and Das 2000; Dupont 1992; Jayaraman and Lanjouw 1998; Rogaly et al. 2001), attest to large increases in labour mobility, particularly short duration migration. In fact, a recent estimate suggests that one-sixth of India's population moves each year, many to work in agriculture, forestry, small industry and construction (Rogaly 1998: 273, fn. 2).[7] What government statistics do reveal, of course, are the movements of people like Manavalan, who take up employment in the formal sector of the economy and establish official residence in the city (while remaining active participants in their rural worlds). Hence, we are able to cull from census data that in India as a whole net rural to urban migration accounted for about one-fifth of all the total urban growth during the census periods, 1961–81. What is even more interesting about studies based on official data (Breman 1994; various essays in Dasgupta 1988; Oberai, Prasad and Sardana 1989; Rao 1986; Yadava 1989, 1992) is their unsystematic but unequivocal recognition of the cultural consequences of migration. For instance, in a valuable survey of migration research from the 1970s and 1980s, Pothana (n.d.: 169, 172) finds more than 85 per cent of all remittance incomes to families of migrants were spent on consumption activities—ceremonies, food, clothing and housing.

A rare ethnographic study supplements this point. Chopra (1995: 3157–58) describes the motivations and aspirations of Bihari return migrants from Punjab, where they worked as agricultural labour. One of her informants narrated the derision that greeted his return from the Punjab to live in his maternal uncle's home. Scorn soon turned to envious admiration as the returnee transformed the modest home into an imposing wood and brick structure with the savings he had brought back. In another case (ibid.: 3159) a young Oraon couple migrated to escape the censure invited by their love affair. Yet they returned in less then two years from

[7] The decennial census of India provides figures on the stock of rural migrants (urban residents of rural origin) in the survey year, and can therefore be used to track decennial changes in migrant inflows to urban areas. Unfortunately, the census data allow no way of discerning permanent migrants from circular migrants. As mentioned in the text, most estimates of circular migration rely on intelligent conjectures from smaller regional surveys and ethnographic studies. Limitations of the Indian census data for migration studies are discussed in Papola (1997), Pothana (n.d.) and Srivastava (1998).

Punjab with enough saved to buy a small plot of land in Ranchi, Bihar, and were married with the blessings of their families. As ethnographies of return and circular migrants are beginning to demonstrate, these sorts of transformations of social space—of relations of production and reproduction; of 'permissible' zones of work, habitation and movement; and of symbolic topologies—are *neither* isolated cases, *nor* regional anomalies (see, for instance, Osella and Osella, n.d., for illustrations from Kerala; Conway and Cohen, 1998, from Oaxaca, Mexico; Mills, 1999, from Thailand; Freeman, 2000, from Barbados; Silvey, 2000, from South Sulawesi; Rogaly et al. 2001 from eastern India; and, of course, the various articles in this volume). How do cosmopolitan technologies enable rural migrants to challenge exploitative agrarian relations, or accelerate processes of innovation and enterprise in rural economy and society? In what ways does circular migration express and/or fulfil the quest for social distinction, or satisfy the search for social anonymity? How do migrants contribute to the deepening of political consciousness and to the rise of ethnic, regional and linguistic identities that are sometimes built upon and at other times contradict conventional caste and class hierarchies? In what ways do transnational and internal migrants become underlabourers to the task of nation building or subversion? These are the sorts of questions that inspire our studies of rural cosmopolitanism. Of these, the connection of migrants to national and sub-national imaginaries seems particularly germane for enquiry.

Nation-making, we know from much new scholarship, is a multitude of processes that not only map populations onto territories, but also harness a variety of discursive technologies that attempt to constitute national peoples through the production of a national literature; the generation and regulation of desire; the exchange of cultural values and styles between regions (within and beyond the territorially-bounded nation); and through selective restrictions on movement and mixing. As Spencer (this volume) persuasively discusses, Sri Lankan Sinhalese nationalism was consolidated, among other tactics, through the Sri Lankan state's efforts to regulate patterns of internal migration by Tamils and Muslims. Perhaps the most visible example, in Spencer's narrative, of how violence, ethnic racisms, and the regulation of movements can become the unholy trinity underwriting projects of nationalism was the rounding-up of activists from the radical Tamil Gandhiyam movement and the state-sponsored expulsion of estate Tamils thought to be associated with them, from eastern Trincomalee back to the Hill Country after the anti-Tamil riots of July 1983. (We could cite any number of contemporary and historical

examples, 19th century United States, 20th century Germany, apartheid South Africa, Indonesia, Serbia, and France—and most recently, at the dawn of the 21st century, the communal violence in Gujarat by Hindutva activists—in support of Spencer's insights). What is clear is that patterns of movement and the way migrant experience is culturally transmitted become important forces in the political construction of 'nation-ness' and, of course, also for challenging dominant nationalisms with other, contrary, forms. Hence, to invoke once again Spencer's discussion of the Sri Lankan Tamil case: the Tamils' biographies of movement—coerced and uncoerced, historic (their importation as estate labour to Ceylon) and current (the flight to Jaffna or to foreign lands)—have obviously been of enormous consequence in the rise of a particular kind of Tamil nationalism.

Historians of modern nation-building frequently tell us that migrants, along with other mobile people, were awkward misfits in nations. Even where they have been crucial to the economic development of nations, migrants have been a great source of nationalist anxiety. But isn't it plausible that cosmopolitan migrants were historically the vehicle whereby particular national technologies were diffused in their places of origin as transgressions of entrenched local codes and spatial orderings? Could circular migration have provided the cement to assemble national imaginations in South Asia? And isn't it also possible today that circular migrants are, once again, providing the impetus to regional political movements that are challenging the hegemony of the nation in that part of the world? Available analyses of electoral politics in Indian states indicate not only a large upsurge in the number of regional parties, but also a disproportionate increase in political participation by Dalit and OBC groups (Pushpendra 1999; Nigam and Yadav 1999; Yadav 1999). In a situation where regional pride has been consolidated in the formation of new states, and where decades of social activism and government policy have undermined the degradation of low caste and tribal workers by higher caste employers, migrants appear to be using their cosmopolitanism to actively struggle against denigration. As Rogaly et al. (this volume) inform us, Muslim workers in rural West Bengal at times declined higher pay because they did not want to observe the purity measures dictated by Hindu employers—like cleaning with cow-dung the places in the courtyard where they ate their daily meal. The same study also reports that the Benias of Singhbhum habitually treated Mal (Paharia) and Sabar (Lodha) as untouchables. They did not participate in migrant work to Medinipur and other irrigated rice bowl areas in order to avoid being placed alongside Mal and Sabar labourers in worker shelters. Meanwhile,

the Sabar and Mal augmented their resources by working in the rice bowl and then repaid Benia insults by refusing to work for them in Singhbhum! In short, these Mal and Sabar migrants—and others like them elsewhere—by returning or circulating remained engaged in political struggles in the rural areas they identify as their first home. It does not seem far-fetched to suggest that rural cosmopolitanism often—but by no means always—manifests itself, in the lives of migrants, as greater political acumen and assertiveness.

In Tamil Nadu's northern plain, middle and Dalit castes with generations of migrant experience gave power early to the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), voting for this broad-based Dravidar party a decade before it was able to ascend to ruling status in the state legislature (Subramanian 1999: 53). In the most recent 2001 elections, the Dalit Panthers of India and Puthiya Thamizhagam—both explicitly Dalit political parties—again failed to capture substantial Dalit votes in the northern plains.[8] This despite the fact that Dalit populations are more numerous and relatively more advantaged economically in these northern districts (especially Chingleput and Tiruvannamalai) than in southern Tamil Nadu, where Dalit parties have recruited more successfully.[9] One explanation for this apparent conundrum is that the Dalit castes, also known as *adi-dravidars*, see a wider Dravidian identity as the locus of political aspirations (even as the dominant non-Brahmin *dravidar* castes, who spearhead the Dravidian movement, seek to exclude them from it). But there are other ways of understanding this ostensibly reactionary cosmopolitanism on the part of mobile Dalit groups in northern Tamil Nadu. We could, for instance, read their denial of support to Dalit parties in

[8] In subsequent local elections, the Dalit parties went alone to the polls, again driven by anxieties about the PMK (a labour party that in northern Tamil Nadu is dominated by Vanniyars), thus revealing Dalit ambivalence towards asserting a caste identity at the expense of alliances among workers of different hue (Suresh Nambath, 'Focus shifts from Vanniyar-Dalit divide in northern districts', *The Hindu*, 15 October 2001).

[9] We may have here—and this is a speculative point at this stage of research—a selective challenge to Aloysius (1998), who distinguishes between cultural and political nationalism and regrets the overall failure of the latter. He argues that lower castes and tribes and religious minorities were denied their aspiration to escape 'the humiliating ascriptive social identity by diversifying occupations and assuming a new anonymity of membership within a larger whole' (ibid.: 209), and goes on to make the case that separate electorates, reserved constituencies, positive discrimination programmes, and identity politics have immeasurably weakened and possibly wrecked the project of political nationalism, with its vision of educational, economic, cultural and political equality in the free nation. The political behaviour of Dalits in northern Tamil Nadu gives pause to this conclusion.

terms of Subramanian's (1999: 61–63) arguments about the successful populism of DMK and ADMK; but we should also note the value and appeal of anonymity promised by an amorphous dravidianism with strong egalitarian strains.[10]

It remains for us to examine in our further researches the precise relationships between rural cosmopolitanism and the second democratic upsurge—which refers to the rise of Dalit, Adivasi, and other minority participation in the electoral and other political processes in a more open, assertive way during the 1990s.[11] At this point, we are limited to strong conjectures. However, what is *not* conjectural is that since the 73rd amendment to the Indian constitution, panchayat (rural council) elections have been fought with much greater intensity and have been the site of more popular participation than either assembly or parliamentary elections over the last decade. Studies show not only greater Dalit and tribal voting in elections, but also their greater participation in election meetings and other forms of political activity connected with elections. As Yadav declares, 'faith in democracy has registered highly significant gains among the most marginalised groups: dalits, tribals and muslims' (2000: 140).

To summarise, how circular migrants as rural cosmopolitans are implicated in the project of nation-making and/or in projects that dissent from the nation are questions tantalisingly present, but largely passed over, in the work of most migration scholars working on South Asia. They are, as evidenced by the preceding analysis, more centrally of concern to us in this project and to the articles in this volume.

The importance of circular migration at various scales is also underlined by critical re-evaluations of the patterns of labour mobilisation in Indian industry and modernised agriculture. De Haan (1999) and Chandavarkar (1998) demonstrate that circular migration is not a transitional and discontinuous phenomenon, as predicted by dual economy models of industrial development and urbanisation. These models suggest that industrialisation

[10] Sivaramakrishnan has just begun to collect popular songs, poetry and devotional music composed by local lower-caste intellectuals in Chengam (Tiruvannamalai). These works are published and marketed by local business enterprises. The admittedly limited analysis possible so far does suggest that these products display a fascinating cultural versatility in style and content. They do not, for the most part, articulate an aggressive Dalit identity, even while expressing reformist concerns for problems widespread among Dalits.

[11] For a discussion of the second democratic upsurge, see Yogendra Yadav (2000). As he points out, this needs to be juxtaposed to the first upsurge in the 1960s, which witnessed the widening and deepening of political participation in the country through the channels of strong middle-of-the-road parties.

produces a permanent transfer of surplus labour from rural areas to the cities, until a point of saturation, when effective wages (money wages adjusted for cost of living differences and job search/migration costs) between urban and rural areas finally equilibrate. At this point, migration ceases or diminishes to a trickle.

The empirical record defies this prediction. If anything, migration has continued to rise in the face of growing informalisation of industrial and urban service sector work (Joshi 1999; Kapadia 1999) and uneven regional patterns of agricultural intensification. Moreover, migrants have continued to retain links to their source (rural) areas. We find, for instance, among the jute mill workers studied by Sen (1999) and de Haan (this volume) that labour circulation did not diminish despite an increase in job security within the industry. This suggests that even workers who inhabit the industrial proletariat, who have few of the privileges of job or life-style that cosmopolitans like Manavalan command, continue to desire involvement in their interrupted rural lives. Powerful social connections and desires to alter place-based hierarchies in the villages of origin impart circularity rather than permanence to the migration process—a finding that echoes that of Carol Stack (1996) in her ethnographic study of black return migrants to the American rural South.

IV
Rural cosmopolitanism and technologies of the self

In an earlier section of the article we mentioned that the borders between spatially and semiotically demarcated worlds, such as the urban and the rural, are always porous; and that cosmopolitanism is the art of deploying technologies from one world to potential advantage in another. This point becomes even more salient if we consider the historical shifts in patterns of migration and the impact of these shifts on family dynamics. As de Haan (this volume) indicates, colonial industrialisation, with its broad resemblances to classic Fordist models of intra-firm organisation, fostered distinct patterns of migration in eastern India: male migrants came to dominate the workforce and leadership roles in it.[12] There was a corresponding decline in female labour participation in these industries (like jute in Calcutta, or collieries in Bihar). In the case of Calcutta's jute industries, Sen (1999) argues that the decline of women in the factory jobs

[12] Studies of steel towns in eastern India corroborate the findings relating to the jute industry (see, for instance, Basak 1988: 396–98).

was part of a nefarious collaboration between Capital and Patriarchy. On a more all-India basis it appears women migrated to become exclusively family-centred workers, or stayed home in the village carrying the additional responsibilities to land, dependents and local community created by the departure of husbands and adult sons (Pothana n.d.: 163; Oberai, Prasad and Sardana 1989: 18). This example suggests that male migrants accepted the normativity of the male hierarchies they encountered in Fordist intra-firm environments, and deployed these within the family structure to consolidate male power.

By contrast, in recent patterns of migration that correspond to a phase of flexible accumulation, women are participating in electronic and information technology industries, as well as in the garment sector. Much of this work is informal, or underground; indeed, much of informal sector work shows a marked trend towards feminisation of the labour force (Pais 2002). Additionally, disinvestment of India's giant public sector undertakings is producing regimes of contract and piecework where, again, work earlier performed by men in secure factory jobs is being transferred to women in casual sweat shop employment (Parry 1999). The net effect is an emerging labour market with a preference for women workers. Unlike the past, it is now men who are being side-lined. Among Dalit groups in northern Tamil Nadu, this actually appears to be generating a crisis of masculinity.[13]

Mills (1999), in her study of Thai women migrants to Bangkok, provides insights into the sort of understanding of rural cosmopolitanism that we are trying to develop in this article. The young migrant women at the centre of this work are living a contradiction every day. Mills designates this conflict as one between being good daughters and becoming modern women.[14] Living in dormitories and cramped quarters

[13] The ongoing work of S. Anandhi and colleagues in Chingleput district examines domestic violence among Dalit families where the women are participating in circular migration to work in Tamil Nadu's burgeoning information technology sector. These are often first generation Dalit women with college degrees, whose cosmopolitanism has provoked male bellicosity. Among other things, unemployed, male Dalit youth in this area are flocking to gymnasiums to work out and build their bodies (personal communication to Sivaramakrishnan from Anandhi, July 2001).

[14] Another illustration of this tension is provided by Piot (1999: 166) who says, 'It is these two values and identities—ritual and wealth—that define north and south, homeland and frontier, as distinct yet dependent, and it is the reciprocal pulls—of ritual responsibility to family and homeland on the one hand, and the need/desire for wealth on the other—that keep Kabre constantly on the move back and forth along the national highway'.

in the slums of Bangkok, and working hard in textile factories, these women realise the adversities of migrant life in a big city in a way that their imaginations could not appreciate when they first chose to make the journey. But in the midst of their difficulties Mills senses a strong sense of enjoyment and an emerging self-conception as independent and worthy individuals. Central to this self-making is their consumption of goods and values that are modern—whether fashions and cosmetics, electronic items, an egalitarian ethic, or the arts of political citizenship, which includes learning how to invoke a discourse of rights as workers and as women in order to press their wage demands (ibid.: 128–33). But in so doing, they do not simultaneously abandon the vernacular sentiments that structure their actions—their financial and emotional obligations to their rural families, or their loyalties to each other. Indeed, these sentiments are harnessed as resources in their attempts to become cosmopolitan; just as cosmopolitan technologies are subsequently harnessed to remake and re-code social spaces in their rural homes.

The boundary work done by migrants in the production of social spaces can be discussed, as well, in terms of the practical mystique and consumption politics that often accompany rural cosmopolitanism. Ballard (this volume) describes the way transnational connections have brought the cosmopolitan experience into the rural hinterland of Mirpur. Given our understanding of circular migration as both short and longer-term patterns of return to places of origination (see fn. 3), Mirpuris can be said to exhibit various temporal patterns of return. Even with transnational migration, the same individuals go though patterns of frequent visits, followed by long absences, and then increasingly frequent returns that are connected with the developmental cycle of the domestic group. Single migrants and those close to retirement (even when not single) are the most frequent returnees. And many are choosing to mark a life of accomplishment in foreign lands by building outwardly spectacular homes that mimic urban architectural styles encountered in travels abroad. Once again the cosmopolitan ideal at work is one that combines a regional familial competitiveness with an aesthetic of display that is self-consciously modernist. It is, of course, important to recognise, as de Haan (this volume) does, that in the case of poorer migrants, their city lives may be very limited spatially and, hence, their urban experiences quite unidimensional. But even these restricted experiences become novelties, won with difficulty. And they are parleyed into an amorphous urbanity that enhances the standing of the migrant who returns bearing the stray markers of

non-local travel—mill fabric, factory-made shoes, jewellery in city styles and similar visible items of comportment and display.

People returning to southern Kerala from the Persian Gulf provide a somewhat different instance of how the mystique of migration works (Osella and Osella 1999, this volume). By setting themselves up as patrons of religious events, many Gulf-returned migrants are transforming wealth into status and power in culturally approved ways—but with twists. The phenomenon is analogous to the merit-making described by Mills in the context of Thailand (1999: 138–46). The struggle, in this case to define what constitutes a pure, powerful and successful *kuthiyottam*, is fascinating. As the Osellas show, the introduction of bright neon lights, hiring new troupes of mixed caste performers with their popular film-inspired songs and dances, and a general garishness to the whole procession is presented as pleasing the goddess through means freshly encoded with ritual worth. Such invention is more freely available as a resource to the cosmopolitan Izhava, who fifty years before could not perform *kuthiyottam* at all. Here cosmopolitanism in ritual is not only being practised with modern elements (electric lighting or synthetic clothes) but also via the creative assertion of a regional cultural framework that incorporates various neighbouring traditions, especially from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

We asserted at the outset that the link between circular migration and what we term rural cosmopolitanism is important to understand precisely because of the material transformations of space (geohistories) it enables in spatial practices (the level of the 'perceived'/social relations of production and re-production), representations of space (the level of the 'conceived'/enacted imaginations of spatial orders, including the space of the body), and representational spaces (the level of the 'lived'/symbolic associations and codings of spaces).

Consider the Vankars' case, a widespread Dalit community in Gujarat, traditionally weavers by occupation,[15] who came to be valued as paddy workers by employers from the Patel and Rajput castes—reputedly because they had nimble fingers that allowed them to transplant rice saplings and weed fields faster and more expertly than workers from other labouring groups. But there is another reason that quickly surfaces in conversations with Patel and Rajput employers: namely that, unlike other Dalit groups, Vankars 'knew their place' in society ('*pota ni jigya*

[15] The name Vankar is a synthesis of the Gujarati noun *van* (meaning 'unginned cotton') and the verb *kar* ('to do'); hence a Vankar is someone who transforms cotton—a weaver.

jaanta hata'). The implication is clear: Vankars were docile and rarely rancorous in their behaviour with upper castes, unlike their fellow Dalits—the Rohits, Vaghris and Bhangis. As ably documented by Marxist scholars, compliance or obedience is an attribute that employers value in workers. But today's Vankars are different.

Gidwani (1996) interviewed twenty Vankar families in his census survey of 353 households in the central Gujarat village of Shamli. Whereas older generation Vankars still display deference towards upper-caste groups, younger generation Vankars are openly opposed to the prevalent caste hierarchy. Their attire and demeanour reflect their hostility to caste norms: they are invariably better dressed than their upper caste counterparts; they refuse to tolerate the use of the term *dhed* (a probable mutation of the word *dahadiya*, which literally translates to 'day labourer'), a derogative that upper castes frequently employ in conversations to describe Vankars; and they place a premium on education as a mark of their difference. It comes as no surprise to learn that the majority of younger generation Vankars are schooled outside the village, and half of the twenty Vankar households have family members engaged in non-farm employment: six work as clerks or chaperones in the sub-district headquarter, two work in the diamond polishing industry in the city of Surat in south Gujarat, one works as a civil engineer in the Public Works Department in a provincial north Gujarat city, and one is a career politician (whose rise to prominence in local politics is signalled by the enormous house he has opted to build in the village's Vankar quarter). None of the Vankars in the non-farm jobs is a woman; the proximate reason for this imbalance appears to be the fact that even the more educated among the younger generation women are unable to pursue jobs once married. Notwithstanding this persistent gender inequity in employment due to patriarchal intra-caste relations, it is clear that migration has been critical in transforming the political consciousness of young Vankars.

Ketanbhai Shamabhai Parmar, son of a Vankar *agevan* (caste elder), told Gidwani of the various indignities his father had to suffer in Shamli as late as 1975—among them unpaid work (*veth*) for prominent Patel families and restrictions forbidding him from walking in the village without headgear or within ten feet of a member of the upper castes, lest these actions 'pollute' village hierarchs. Pointing to a portrait of B.R. Ambedkar (the charismatic founder of organised 20th century Dalit politics in India), Ketanbhai vowed that Vankars and other Dalits would one day displace upper caste rule in Gujarat. In his view, education leading

to non-farm employment (preferably in a secure government job) was key to this aspiration. With this goal in mind, and at considerable personal expense, he has recently dispatched his 11-year-old daughter to a reputable boarding school in the city of Ahmedabad.[16]

In short, the growing participation of Dalits and tribals in migration circuits carries with it a potential for the politicisation of agency that can influence subsequent patterns of labour deployment. But as Scott (1985) and others have demonstrated, subordinated groups face formidable impediments in mobilising overt resistance to exploitative social relations. Consequently, the norm is a more subdued, often obtuse, repudiation of social hierarchies through 'aesthetic transgressions' that recast bodies and, therefore, the body politic.[17] These transgressions may take the form of altered attire, speaking styles, mannerisms, diets and consumption habits. Thus, during fieldwork in Tiruvannamalai district, Tamil Nadu, in June 1997, Sivaramakrishnan noted with interest the reaction of dominant peasant and business castes towards the Malayali people (Scheduled Tribes) of Javadi Hills. Over the past decade, the Malayalis have increasingly begun to participate in seasonal labour circuits spanning Tamil Nadu and adjoining Karnataka. Their travels have generated money and attitude, and diminishing deference towards the plains elite. Reflecting resentment over his loss of social control and standing with the Malayalis, one farmer in the village of Valiyambadu told Sivaramakrishnan with considerable indignation that:

> the Malayali returns from urban work with lots of cash and then buys fancy face creams in the local store while we [the local farmers] continue to use cheap soaps![18]

[16] This information is distilled from Gidwani's field notes on changing agrarian relations in Shamli village of Matar subdistrict of Kheda district, Gujarat, recorded between 8 May 1994 and 31 August 1995. Village and respondent names have been altered to preserve confidentiality.

[17] It is important to clarify that we view aesthetics as an aspect of politics. In so doing, we abjure a common view (sometimes linked to the works of Adorno and Horkheimer) that interprets aesthetics as a form of escape from (the despair of) politics. We want to assert the materiality of aesthetics; hence, its expression not just in consumption styles but also the recasting of the working body. Having clarified this, we clearly believe that body politics exceeds aesthetics because the domination of bodies cannot—and should not—be reduced to aesthetics alone. That would diminish the physical and psychological violence of domination.

[18] Interestingly enough, the cheap soaps referred to here included the ubiquitous Lifebuoy from the multinational Lever Brothers which, in a different southern African context (Burke 1996), symbolised a less divisive civility.

Meanwhile, clothing is a central element in Dalit body politics because of the severe proscriptions that have been imposed on their dress by the upper castes (see Tarlo 1996). Under the old *jajman* (patron) system, it was customary for Dalits to receive clothing from their *jajman* at festival time. Dalits were almost universally prohibited from wearing headgear of any sort in the presence of an upper caste; in parts of Tamil Nadu, they were also prohibited from carrying an umbrella, wearing a shirt, wearing shoes, or sunglasses. More degradingly, until the 1930s, Dalit women in Ramnad district of Tamil Nadu were neither allowed to cover their breasts nor wear a *sari* that reached below the ankle; and Dalit men were compelled to wear loin-cloths that could not reach below the knees (Deliége 1999: 107). On a field visit in June 1999 to the village of Vanampuram, a multi-caste peri-urban village just a few miles out of Tiruvannamalai town, we received a first-hand introduction to the politics of attire. In conversation with a local landowner and politician, a member of the socially dominant but numerically small Agamudiyar caste, we happened to inquire about labour availability in the village for agricultural operations. Our informant complained bitterly about labour scarcity. He told us that younger generation Dalits in the village, who constitute the bulk of the rural workforce, now prefer to work in construction and urban industries in Hosur, Tiruppur and other similar industrial centres in south India. Then, with obvious ire, he mocked the Dalits on their newly-acquired dress habits: 'They parade around in jeans and costly sports shoes.' Although the Dalits have not yet discarded their attitude of overt deference towards the local elite, their preference for migratory work and consumption of western attire indicate to landed groups like the Kurumbar and Ahamudiyar that the traditional social order is under siege.

Tarlo (1996) provides a comparable illustration from Saurashtra, Gujarat. She registers the anthropological disorientation she experienced when she first walked into the Harijan *vas* (hamlet) in the village of Jalia:

> [W]hat I actually saw were rather modern and fashionable-looking people. There were young women dressed in *shalwar kamizes* and even adolescent girls wearing skirts and blouses, with their calves exposed, such as I had rarely seen before in the village. Married women were dressed mainly in neat saris, and the men almost without exception wore trousers and shirts (Tarlo 1996: 276).

Her initial surprise soon gives way to a search for explanation on the politics of attire. By the end of her stay in Jalia she concludes (perhaps on an overly voluntaristic note):

> The absence of a coherent caste dress in the past, combined with the relatively high levels of education and urban employment among *Harijans* today, gives them more freedom in their choice of dress than many other villagers .... The future of the *Harijans* lies not in the maintenance of tradition but in breaking with it and trying to forge a new, more acceptable identity independent of the hierarchical foundations of caste. They are therefore free to adopt synthetic saris and *shalwar kamizes* which enable them to participate in progressive, mainstream fashion, and [signal that] they have no desire to compete in the caste-bound hierarchy of dress within the village itself where prejudice against *Harijans* continues to abound (Tarlo 1996: 281).

Note that we are not arguing in this article that such politics around the technologies of the self are entirely symptomatic of late capitalist modernity. But the growing *intensity* of circular migration and the participation of *new* Dalit and tribal groups in this process over the last twenty years in dry land India is of particular interest. It presents aspects of continutity and rupture from the colonial period. Northern Tamil Nadu, one of our current research sites, is illustrative. The regional economy had always depended on a considerable volume of trade that passed through the *kottai* (fort)-*pettai* (commercial centre) settlements where weekly markets called *sandai* flourished (Tamilvanan 1988: 42–48). The plains produced oilseeds, cotton, pulses, millets, bricks, tiles, stone, timber and cattle. Food imports and export of these products was crucial to the economy of the Arcot plains (Cox 1881; Murton 1973). On the eve of colonial conquest this marginally agricultural economy had come to rest on a system of local military chiefs and their tenurial arrangements, with cultivating militiamen, which combined fixed assessments and quit rentss.[19]

The whole area was cleared rapidly in the 19th century—areas infested by tigers in subtropical jungles became tank-irrigated rice fields between the 1790s and the 1860s (see Arrowsmith 1822; Hoole 1844). But the area also continued to serve as an internal frontier. Bad rainfall or oppressive revenue demand, and certainly their combination, continued to provoke the mobility of thousands of plains inhabitants in the Arcot region

[19] Letters dated 7 February 1801 and 14 July 1801 from George Stratton, Collector North Arcot to William Petrie, President Board of Revenue, *Reports on the Western Pollams* (Chittoor: Collectorate Press, 1916), pp. 3–5.

even as agrarian sedentarisation gained ground (Baker 1984: 81).[20] The adaptations of the 19th century set the stage for the transformations of the 20th century when the Arcot plains and other such regions got involved in the supply of international commodity markets with the crops they had grown before in small quantities—cotton and groundnut.[21] In the post-Depression period, a high proportion of families in the Arcot region began to supplement their income with work outside agriculture and as labourers in the lands of dominant village families. By the 1950s almost 40 per cent of villagers in the area belonged to families in which one or more members were circular migrants (ibid.: 166). Many of the people described by N.G. Ranga, in his evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour in 1930, already came from northern Tamil Nadu. He said:

> the toddy carriers of Madras go to the city for a stay of three to six months in the year and therefore expect to return to their villages, as soon as the specially busy season is over ... the cart-pullers, rickshaw-pullers and many of the casual workers of the city of Madras are also drafted from the village but they always keep on their relation with their villages ... the cotton mills of Madura and Coimbatore are mostly dependent upon the workers coming from the neighbouring villages and therefore unable to work full time and at full speed during times of brisk work in the fields.[22]

From the mid-19th century, the people of North and South Arcot, Chingleput, Dharmapuri and Salem districts have participated in new forms of migration.[23] These journeys have taken them to Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia (Malaysian rubber plantations, for instance, especially after the

[20] The landscape of the plains favoured millet cultivation and some other crops like oilseeds and pulses, with rice restricted to tank irrigated hollows alongside streams and rivulets. Varagu, cumbu, ragi, and samai were the common millets.

[21] Groundnut in particular succeeded in the plains for several reasons. It was relatively cheap to cultivate, liked the light soils, tolerated rainfall variations within the range of 20–50 inches per annum, provided fodder and manure in the form of oilcakes, and was a legume usefully rotated with grain-like millets.

[22] Anon, 1931, *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India* (Calcutta: Central Publications Branch), Evidence, Volume III, pt. 1, pp. 322–23 (hereafter *RCL Report*).

[23] As Guilmoto points out, pre-colonial migrations from Tamil Nadu to Southeast Asia and Africa were negligible. Colonial rule, from the early 19th century, gave a great boost to overseas migration—cheap labour becoming the first major export from British India (Guilmoto 1993: 111–12).

1880s), the Caribbean, South Africa, Mauritius, industralising parts of India in the coal belt and coastal towns, and—closer to home—the rice bowl areas of southern Tamil Nadu where there was a steady increase in labour absorption in agriculture throughout the 20th century.[24] One feature of labour mobility in south India, whether it was for factory work in the cotton mills of Kongunad, various service occupations in Madras and other small towns, and even for plantation employment in the Nilgiris and Western Ghats, was that the first half of the 20th century did not witness a major movement of rural people into permanent urban residence.[25] Patterns of circulation described then have often persisted, and probably been accentuated in later decades as road transport improved dramatically, the railway network expanded, and the informality of most employment meant that the costs of sustaining or reproducing the workers was chiefly borne by kin, and their places of origin.

The novel patterns of circular migration discovered in recent fieldwork have to be situated within emergent regional modernities of northern Tamil Nadu sketched here. They also have to be examined for their distinctive effects in reshaping these modernities through the rural cosmopolitanism of groups who were sedentarised or localised in their circulation in the colonial period and the early decades of independence. For instance, the Malayalis of the Javadis are relative newcomers to patterns of travel across district and state boundaries. A randomly assembled group of six informants told us, in response to our questions in the summer of 1999, that neither they nor their parents had travelled to construction sites in Bangalore, or plantations in the Coorg, before the 1980s. Their migrations are still organised around the sowing and harvesting of dry rice (*samai*) in the monsoon season (July-December). A

[24] J. Geoghehan, *Note on emigration from India* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1873); Parliamentary Proceedings, *Correspondence respecting the Discontinuance of Coolie Importation from India to French Guiana* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1878); Parliamentary Proceedings, *Papers Relating to the Condition of Indian Immigrants in Grenada* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1879); D.W.D. Comins, *Notes on Emigration from the East Indies to St. Lucia* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1893); Census of India 1951, Vol. III, *Madras and Coorg*, Part 1, Madras: Government Press, 1953, pp. 13–29; Census of India 1961, Vol. IX, Madras, part I-A(1), Madras: The Government Press, 1966, pp. 395–411; Census of India 1971, Series 19, Tamil Nadu, Part 1-A, Madras: Directorate of Census Operations, 1979, pp. 221–37.

[25] *RCL Report*, 1931, pp. 353–54 Even migrants to Sri Lankan plantations, where the introduction of tea in the 1890s encouraged the settlement of entire families to minimise seasonal movement, returned regularly throughout the colonial period (Guilmoto 1993: 113).

primary incentive for migration is the prospect of lump sum earnings that are used for the liquidation of high interest debts owed to money-lenders in the Javadi Hills. Brideprice, house-building, and the consumption of cigarettes, soaps, radios, watches, clothes and shoes are additional priorities.

In sharp contrast to the Adivasi Malayalis, Dalit youth migrants from adjoining plains villages were more likely to use the migration experience to enhance their qualifications for semi-skilled work and elude the drudgery of farm work for caste landowners. Some stressed prospects for economic mobility by highlighting opportunities to work for, and learn, tile manufacture as it mushroomed around a booming construction industry in expanding towns. Others underscored the excitement of travel and the newly found solidarity they experienced with Dalit co-workers as they circulated through south India installing and dismantling temporary structures (*pandals*) used for political meetings, government functions, festivals, and fairs.[26]

V
Conclusion

The concept of rural cosmopolitanism represents our challenge to the conventional notion of cosmopolitanism. In the figure of the circular migrant we find someone who is able to straddle a world of difference (for example, the urban and the rural) and come to recognise the political relations that secure and naturalise that difference. Migrants can be transnational, but are very often sub-national—and no less cosmopolitan for it. Indeed, cosmopolitanism operates at various scales and should not be confined to the international alone. We also find in the person of the migrant someone who transmits through movements in geographic space not just sensibilities and ideas, but also the materials and techniques

[26] This description, including the preceding paragraph, draws on Sivaramakrishnan's field notes for June 1999. A study is presently being conducted in four villages, including one tribal village, and three multi-caste villages with significant Dalit populations in Tiruvannamalai district, Tamil Nadu. One of these villages has been specifically selected for its peri-urban location, less than ten miles from the district town. In addition to open-ended interviews, and spells of participant observation, a baseline survey of socio-economic characteristics was conducted in all the four villages during 1999–2000, covering 1,534 families in the multi-caste villages and fifty-six families in the tribal village. Migration stories were collected in the course of these surveys and ethnographic fieldwork in the summer of 2001.

that enable the production and transformation of the social space of multiple worlds (not merely the social space of the rural, but also of the urban, the regional, the national, and what gets inscribed as the global). Remember Manavalan? His urban existence gives him leverage on how he is able to negotiate rural social relations and imagine his rurality; but similarly, if not symmetrically, his rural existence provides leverage in his urban social relations and imagination of urbanity. The same could be said for our plebeian cosmopolitans, the teenage girls, although their transformative capacities might be qualitatively and quantitatively quite different from Manavalan's.

Finally, rural cosmopolitanism does not always produce progressive political agendas (much as our personal sympathies might lie with such agendas). Often, the transformations of social space circular migrants enact, re-inscribe and consolidate traditional arrangements, rather than undermine them. We find it important, then, to examine the spatial practices of migrants and the ways in which circulation enables them to reconstitute their livelihood possibilities, their political identities, and the fields of power that regulate their spaces of work, pleasure, habitation, and everyday life. Specifically, we want to suggest that the rural cosmopolitan is that ambivalent and largely invisible figure who forces, to quote Kahn (2001: 656), 'a rethinking of the vision of an abstract, universal condition called modernity and an engagement [instead] with the particular dimensions of modern existence ...'—what we have called, in another paper, regional modernities (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan, forthcoming).

The relationship of migration to nations is important for this reason and others. Rural cosmopolitanism, like the creolisation of French departments discussed by Verges (2001), emerges from ambivalence to the idea of building collective strategies based on cultural particularism. This means that migrants as cosmopolitans are key figures shaping the cultural politics of nationalism in India and elsewhere. Their versatility and constant re-adaptation raise the grand hope that future diverse identities will be based on non-ascriptive relations rather than filiation, ancestry, or land. In the limited context of the argument developed in this article, we have tried to show how patterns of movement are implicated in the constitution of hegemonising national identities and, also, dissenting sub-national or post-national identities.

We have also tried *not* to suggest that circular migration and rural cosmopolitanism are somehow new phenomena. Our ongoing research

in dry land rural areas of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, where chronic uncertainty in farming—the primary livelihood activity—is the norm, shows that migration is a dynamic and long-standing phenomenon. Indeed, forced and voluntary migrations have been part of the modern history of dry and forest regions in different parts of India (Bates and Carter 1993; Kavoori 1999; Mohapatra 1985; Racine 1997; Vasavi 1999). Parry's study (this volume) of the pattern of recruitment to the Bhilai Steel Plant labour force also shows that those who were already migrant workers were more readily absorbed in the first waves of recruitment for the steel plant. The chronic insecurity of agriculture in the dry areas of Chattisgarh also meant that significant migrant histories existed in these areas: late 19th century migrations to tea gardens in Assam had been followed by migrations to the jute mills in Calcutta and then to the railway centre at Kharagpur. Collieries and steel townships in the post-independence period recruited the later generations of migrants; and as it transpired, the *Satnamis* (ex-Chamar, Dalit converts to the reformist sect of Ghasi Das) dominated the ranks of migrants.

If the colonial migrant traversed the lines of connection drawn by imperial power and capital flows, postcolonial migrants have participated in the formation of Nehruvian secular citizenry while renegotiating bonds of caste, region, religion and language, in the decades immediately following independence. In the current period of economic liberalisation, as informal, casualised and feminised workforces become mobile in new patterns that we have characterised as 'regionally modern', citizenship and political participation are also acquiring new meanings. As we have suggested, historically marginalised groups are now politically active at unprecedented levels. The increase in political participation in the 1990s coincides with the increase in the power of state governments through privatisation and liberalisation. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Goa have been the major beneficiaries of the liberalisation in the 1990s (Frankel 2000: 14–15). These have also been the states (with the addition of Punjab and Haryana) where regional agrarian capitalists, new business groups and regional political parties have symbiotically emerged to orchestrate and control the new wave of industrial and entrepreneurial growth that was in evidence in the 1990s. Development projects have constituted the social and economic geographies of nations by demarcating industrial centres, free trade zones, model farms, large-scale irrigation and energy production projects and linking all of these by national networks of road, shipping and air transport. Migrant experiences have refashioned these geographies by

translating and transposing them in homes, villages, towns, cities, and in regimes of production, value, cultural sophistication, and political rights—in short, the triadic social spaces of Lefebvre (1991). When migrants traverse the uneven terrain of modern nations, they map the diverse routes from village to city and back to the village. Migration, thus, becomes central to the production of modern citizens. All this, discussed here preliminarily as rural cosmopolitanism, reminds us of the constant tension between the disciplinary and emancipatory effects of migration on subject formation.

REFERENCES

ALOYSIUS, G. 1998. *Nationalism without a nation in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

APPADURAI, A. 1996. *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

ARROWSMITH, A. 1822. *Atlas of south India from Cape Comorin to the river Kistnah*. London.

BAKER, C. 1984. *An Indian rural economy, 1880–1955: The Tamilnad countryside*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

BALIBAR, E. 1991. Racism and nationalism. *In* E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, eds., *Race, nation, class: Ambiguous identities*. pp. 37–67. London: Verso.

BASAK, N. 1988. The impact of steel towns on regional development: A case study of Durgapur. *In* B. Dasgupta, ed., *Urbanization, migration, and rural change: A study of West Bengal*, pp. 394–418. Calcutta: A. Mukherjee and Co.

BATES, C. and M. CARTER 1993. Tribal indentured migrants in colonial India: Modes of recruitment and forms of incorporation. *In* P. Robb, ed., *Dalit movements and the meaning of labour in India*, pp. 159–85. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

BAYLY, C A. 1986. The origins of swadeshi (home industry): Cloth and Indian society, 1700–1930. *In* A. Appadurai, ed., *The social life of things*, pp 285–322. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BREMAN, J. 1994. *Wage hunters and gatherers: Search for work in the urban and rural economy of south Gujarat*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1996. *Footloose labour: Working in India's informal economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1999. The study of industrial labour in postcolonial India—The informal sector: A concluding review. *In* Jonathan Parry, Jan Breman and Karin Kapadia, eds., *The worlds of Indian industrial labour*, pp. 407–31. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

BREMAN, J. and A. DAS. 2000. *Down and out: Labouring in the global economy*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

BURKE, T. 1996. *Lifebuoy men, Lux women: Commodification, consumption, and cleanliness in modern Zimbabwe*. Durham: Duke University Press.

CHAKRABARTY, D. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

CHANDAVARKAR, R. 1998. *Imperial power and popular politics: Class, resistance and the state in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

CHOPRA, R. 1995. Maps of experience: Narratives of migration in an Indian village *Economic and political weekly* 30, 49: 3156–62.

CONWAY, D. and J. COHEN 1998. Consequences of migration and remittances for Mexican transnational communities. *Economic geography* 74, 1: 26–44.

COX, A. 1881. *A manual of the North Arcot district in the Madras Presidency*. Madras Government Press.

DASGUPTA, B. ed. 1988. *Urbanization, migration, and rural change: A study of West Bengal*. Calcutta: A. Mukherjee and Co.

DELIÈGE, R. 1999. *The untouchables of India* (trans. Nora Scott). Oxford: Berg.

DE HAAN, A. 1994. *Unsettled settlers: Migrant workers and industrial capitalism in Calcutta*. Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi.

———. 1999. The badli system in industrial labour recruitment: Managers' and workers' strategies in Calcutta's jute industry. *In* J. Parry, J. Breman and K. Kapadia, eds., *The worlds of Indian industrial labour*, pp. 271–303. New Delhi. Sage Publications.

DUPONT, V. 1992. Impact of migration on industrial development. Case study of Jetpur in Gujarat. *Economic and political weekly* 27, 45: 2423–36.

FERGUSON, J. 1999. *Expectations of modernity: Myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

FRANKEL, F. 2000. Contextual democracy: Intersections of society, culture and politics in India. *In* F. Frankel, Z. Hasan, R. Bhargava and B. Arora, eds., *Transforming India: Social and political dynamics of democracy*, pp. 1–25. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

FREEMAN, C. 2000. *High tech and high heels in the global economy*. Durham: Duke University Press.

GIDWANI, V.K. 1996. Fluid dynamics: An essay on canal irrigation and the processes of agrarian change in Matar taluka, Kheda district (Gujarat), India, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley.

GIDWANI, V. and K. SIVARAMAKRISHNAN. Forthcoming. Circular migration and the spaces of cultural assertion. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*.

GUILMOTO, C.Z. 1993. The Tamil migration cycle, 1830–1950. *Economic and political weekly* 28, 2 & 3: 111–20.

GUPTA, A. and J. FERGUSON. 1997. Beyond 'culture': Space, identity and the politics of difference. *In* A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, eds., *Culture, power, place*, pp. 33–51. Durham: Duke University Press.

HANNERZ, U. 1996. *Transnational connections: Culture, people, places*. London: Routledge.

HARVEY, D. 1989. *The condition of postmodernity: An inquiry into the origin of cultural change*. Oxford· Blackwell.

HOOLE, E. 1844. *Madras, Mysore and the south of India, or a personal narrative of a mission to these countries from 1820–28*. London

JAYARAMAN, R. and P. LANJOUW 1998. *Rural living standards in India: A perspective from longitudinal village studies*. WPS 1870, Poverty and Human Resources Division, Development Research Group. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

JOSHI, C. 1999. Hope and despair: Textile workers in Kanpur in 1937–38 and the 1990s. *In* J. Parry, J. Breman and K. Kapadia, eds., *The worlds of Indian industrial labour*, pp. 171–203. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

KAHN, J. 2001. Anthropology and modernity. *Current anthropology* 42, 5: 651–64.

KAPADIA, K. 1999. Gender ideologies and the formation of rural industrial classes in south India today. *In* J. Parry, J. Breman and K. Kapadia, eds., *The worlds of Indian industrial labour*, pp 329–52. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

KAVOORI, P. 1999. *Pastoralism in expansion: The transhuming herders of western Rajasthan*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

LATOUR, B. 1999. *Pandora's hope: Essays on the reality of science studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

LEFEBVRE, H. 1991. *The production of space* (trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith). Oxford: Blackwell.

MILLS, M.B. 1999. *Thai women in the global labour force: Consuming desires, contested selves*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

MOHAPATRA, P. 1985. Coolies and colliers: A study of the agrarian context of labour migration from Chota Nagpur, 1880–1920. *Studies in history* (n.s.) 1, 2: 247–303.

MURTON, B. 1973. Some propositions on the spread of village settlement in interior Tamil Nadu before 1750. *Indian geographical journal* 38, 2: 56–66.

NIGAM, A. and Y. YADAV. 1999. Electoral politics in Indian states, 1989–99. *Economic and political weekly* 34, 34 & 35: 2391–92.

OBERAI, A.S., P.H. PRASAD and M.G. SARDANA. 1989. *Determinants and consequences of internal migration in India: Studies in Bihar, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

OSELLA, F. and C. OSELLA. 1999. From transience to immanence: Consumption, life-cycle and social mobility in Kerala, south India. *Modern Asian studies* 33, 4: 989–1020.

———. n.d. Once upon a time in the West? Narrating modernity in Kerala, south India. Unpublished paper.

PAIS, J. 2002. Casualization of urban labour force: Analysis of recent trends in manufacturing. *Economic and political weekly* 37, 7: 631–52.

PAPOLA, T.S. 1997. Extent and implications of rural-urban migration in India. *In* G. Jones and P. Visaria, eds., *Urbanization in large developing countries*, pp. 315–20. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

PARRY, J.P. 1999. Lords of labour: Working and shirking in Bhilai. *In* J.P. Parry, J. Breman and K Kapadia, eds., *The worlds of Indian industrial labour*, pp. 107–40. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

PIOT, C. 1999. *Remotely global: Village modernity in West Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

POLLOCK, S., H. BHABHA, C. BRECKENRIDGE and D. CHAKRABARTHY. 2000. Cosmopolitanisms. *Public culture* 12, 3: 577–89.

POTHANA, V. n.d. Rural-urban migration and rural development: Myth or reality (evidence from Indian village studies). *Bulletin: Madras Development Seminar Series* 15, 12: 162–76.

PUSHPENDRA. 1999. Dalit assertion through electoral politics. *Economics and political weekly* 34, 36: 2609–18.

RACINE, J.L. ed. 1997. *Peasant moorings: Village ties and mobility rationales in south India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

RAO, M.S.A. 1986. *Studies in migration*. Delhi: Manohar.

ROBBINS, B. 1999. *Feeling global: Internationalism in distress*. New York: New York University Press.

ROFEL, L. 1997. Rethinking modernity: Space and factory discipline in China. *In* A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, eds., *Culture, power, place*, pp. 155–78. Durham: Duke University Press.

ROGALY, B. 1998. Containing conflict and reaping votes: Management of rural labour relations in West Bengal. *Economic and political weekly* 33, 42 & 43: 2729–39.

ROGALY, B., J. BISWAS, D. COPPARD, A. RAFIQUE, K. RANA and A. SENGUPTA. 2001. Seasonal migration, social change, and migrants' rights: Lessons from West Bengal. *Economic and political weekly* 36, 49: 4547–59.

SCOTT, J.C. 1985. *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

SEN, S. 1999. *Women and labour in late colonial India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

SILVEY, R. 2000. Diasporic subjects: Gender and mobility in South Sulawesi. *Women's studies international forum* 23, 4: 501–15.

SRIVASTAVA, R. 1998. Migration and the labour market in India. *Indian journal of labour economics* 41, 4: 583–616.

STACK, C. 1996. *Call to home: African Americans reclaim the rural south*. New York: Basic Books.

SUBRAMANIAN, N. 1999. *Ethnicity and popular mobilization: Political parties, citizens, and democracy in south India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

TAMILVANAN, L. 1988. *Vatarkattu Mavattam* (In Tamil). Chennai: Manimekalai Press.

TARLO, E. 1996. *Clothing matters: Dress and identity in India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

VASAVI, A.R. 1999 *Harbingers of rain: Land and life in south India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

VERGES, F. 2001. Vertigo and emancipation, creole cosmopolitanism and cultural politics. *Theory, culture and society* 18, 2 & 3: 169–83.

YADAV, Y. 1999. Electoral politics in the time of change: India's third electoral system, 1989–99. *Economic and political weekly* 34, 34 & 35: 2393–99.

———. 2000. Understanding the second democratic upsurge: Trends of Bahujan participation in electoral politics in the 1990s. *In* F. Francine, Z. Hasan, R. Bhargava and B. Arora, eds., *Transforming India: Social and political dynamics of democracy*, pp 120–45. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

YADAVA, K.N.S. 1989. *Rural-urban migration in India: Determinants, patterns, consequences*. Delhi: Independent Publishing Company.

———. 1992. *Rural-urban commutation and rural development*. Delhi: Shipra.

ZHANG, L. 2001 Migration and privatization of space and power in late socialist China. *American ethnologist* 28, 1: 179–205.

Of related interest

CULTURE, SPACE AND THE NATION-STATE
From Sentiment to Structure

Dipankar Gupta

This ambitious and thoughtful work defies easy summarisation. Dipankar Gupta engages some of the most prominent institutions and phenomena of our time—nation-states, culture, space, citizenship, the production of majorities and minorities, public policy as it pertains to affirmative action (or reservations), and social justice.

Asian Journal of Political Science, Volume 9, No. 1

In this book, the author offers fresh insights and analytical tools to examine a much-contested subject—the nation-state.

The Telegraph, 13 April 2001

With its strong analytical and theoretical bases, this book will be of immense use to sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists and those in the field of cultural studies and the study of social systems.

The Financial Express, 12 November 2000

CONTENTS: *Preface* • From Sentiment • Introduction: Culture, Space and Social Membership/Space, Non-Space and Site: Root Metaphor and Lex/Root Metaphor and Regnant Sets of Meanings/Space, Territory and Nation-State • To Structure • Society or the State: What Happened to Citizenship?/Fraternity, Citizenship and Affirmative Action: Recasting Reservation in the Language of Rights/Positive Discrimination and the Question of Fraternity: Rawls and the Communitarians/Minoritization and the Public Sphere/*References and Select Bibliography/Index/About the Author*

220mm × 140mm • hb/pb • 282pp. • 2000

SAGE Publications
New Delhi • Thousand Oaks • London

CONTENTS

RICHARD KING, *Orientalism and religion: Postcolonial theory, India and 'the mystic east'*

AND

JOHN ZAVOS, *The emergence of Hindu nationalism in India* **(T.N. Madan)** 371

PETER GOTTSCHALK, *Beyond Hindu and Muslim: Multiple identity in narratives from village India* **(Sasheej Hegde)** 375

NIRAJA GOPAL JAYAL and SUDHA PAI, eds., *Democratic governance in India: Challenges of poverty, development and identity* **(Jos Mooij)** 377

VIJAY PRASHAD, *Untouchable freedom: A social history of a dalit community* **(Edward A. Rodrigues)** 379

RANGANAYAKAMMA, *For the solution of the 'caste' question, Buddha is not enough, Ambedkar is not enough either, Marx is a must* **(Satendra Kumar)** 383

RUKMINI BHAYA NAIR, RAMNIK BAJAJ and ANKUR MEATTLE, *Technobrat: Culture in cybernetic classroom* **(Deepthi S. Aradhya)** 383

ROMILA THAPAR, *Cultural pasts: Essays in early Indian history* **(Rajan Gurukkal)** 384

LIONEL CAPLAN, *Children of colonialism: Anglo-Indians in a postcolonial world* **(Rowena Robinson)** 387

CARLA PETIEVICH, ed., *The expanding landscape: South Asians and the diaspora*

AND

PARAMA ROY, *Indian traffic: Identities in question in colonial and postcolonial India* **(Aparna Rayaprol)** 389

LEELA DUBE, *Anthropological explorations in gender: Intersecting fields* **(Nilika Mehrotra)** 391

MARTHA ALTER CHEN, *Perpetual mourning: Widowhood in rural India* **(Uma Chakravarti)** 393

MAINA CHAWLA SINGH, *Gender, religion and 'Heathen Lands': American missionary women in south Asia (1860s–1940s)* **(Mrinalini Sebastian)** 395

SARAH CALDWELL, *Oh terrifying mother: Sexuality, violence and worship of the goddess Kali* **(Nilika Mehrotra)** 397

BISWAMOY PATI and MARK HARRISON, eds., *Health, medicine and empire: Perspectives on colonial India* **(Maina Chawla Singh)** 398

MINNA SAAVALA, *Fertility and familial power relations: Procreation in south India* **(Leela Visaria)** 400

DENNIS B. MCGILVRAY, *Symbolic heat: Gender, health and worship among the Tamils of south India and Sri Lanka* **(Ruby Bhardwaj)** 403

K.C. ZACHARIAH and S. IRUDAYA RAJAN, eds., *Kerala's demographic transition: Determinants and consequences* **(R.P. Tyagi)** 403

JUDITH LORBER, *Gender and the social construction of illness* **(Mala Kapur Shankardass)** 404

RICHARD KING, *Orientalism and religion: Postcolonial theory, India and 'the mystic east'*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999. x + 283 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. Rs. 495 (hardback).

AND

JOHN ZAVOS, *The emergence of Hindu nationalism in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000. ix + 245 pp. Notes, glossary, bibliography, index. Rs. 450 (hardback).

The last quarter of the 19th century in India has been the focus of deep and abiding interest to students of political and social history. Many books have been written about the founding of the Indian National Congress, the emergence of social reform movements (such as the Arya Samaj) among the Hindus in different parts of the country, and the coming into prominence of both secular and religious leaders such as Gokhale and Vivekananda. Since the mid-1980s the resurgence of Hindu nationalism in an aggressive political form—a form that Vivekananda had warned against and denounced—has understandably led scholars to study contemporary developments as well as those of a hundred years ago from new perspectives. Books have been written about Hindutva, the RSS, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), on the one hand, and about the Orientalist and colonial discourses and their postcolonial critiques, on the other. These lines of inquiry obviously reinforce and illumine each other. It is this convergence that brings together the books by King and Zavos, despite their different points of departure, foci of interest, and theoretical perspectives.

King's book is the more ambitious of the two and is also theoretically more nuanced, reflecting the author's self-reflexive intellectual position. He discusses the circumstances overshadowed by debates within the Christian tradition and by Enlightenment dichotomies (West and East, nationalism and religion, etc.) that led to the Orient being characterised in opposition to the Occident as 'mystic'. Discussions of non-Christian religions of the East were flawed by Judeo-Christian preconceptions about the nature and universality of religion as an essential aspect of human culture. A contempt for oral traditions led to their textualisation and the discovery of 'core' texts, the pre-eminence of the Bhagavad Gita in modern (neo-)Hinduism being a good example. Indology as the study of Hinduism's textual tradition was a 'gift' of the Occident, serious and scholarly, but crippled

by category assumptions that resulted in fabrications, fragmentations and even falsifications. Thus, the recognition given to Hinduism as the religion of the majority of the people of India, and its long history going back to Vedic times a couple of millennia ago, is now rightly—but often exaggeratedly—seen as a colonial fiction constructed by the would-be saviours of Hindu souls (namely the Christian missionaries) and their defenders (the Hindu nationalists).

It is to King's credit, however, that he repudiates the one-sidedness of the postcolonial perspective emanating from the work of Edward Said, Ronald Inden and others. He argues not only that Orientalism was a two-way traffic, but also that the history of the modern West was partly made in the East. Moreover, King rightly emphasises that Indians were not passive recipients of images of their society and culture, but contributed significantly to their construction. Grounding himself in a hermeneutic position (Gadamer emerges as a notable influence), he argues for gaps and bridges—for a fusion of horizons. Having laid bare the intellectual interests and impulses that gave birth to Indology, he argues vigorously for its continued relevance as a self-reflexive discipline (not mere mimicry) with enormous potential. New understandings of the role of knowledge in a postcolonial setting are, of course, everywhere indebted to Michel Foucault's insights about the knowledge-power nexus, and King makes critical use of these insights.

If Indology of a century ago homogenised India's religious traditions in its preoccupation with a world religion that could aspire to be an interlocutor (and even instructor) of the West, today's Hindutva too proceeds along a path of cultural hegemony employing the strategies of inclusion and exclusion within the country. But Hindutva is not King's concern; he does not discuss it except indirectly. His concerns are centred in the twin fields of Religious Studies (a 'secular' discipline) and Indology. Looking to the future, King writes:

> The introduction of a variety of indigenous epistemic traditions is ... the single most important step postcolonial studies can take if it is to look beyond the Eurocentric foundations of its theories and contest the epistemic violence of the colonial encounter. This challenge requires engagement with the knowledge-forms and histories of those cultures that have been colonized by the West and, somewhat ironically, provides a role for disciplines such as Indology in the questioning of Western hegemonies and regimes of epistemic violence (p. 199).

The above is not a summary of the contents of the book which are rich and varied. My attempt has been only to present to the reader its broad scope, stretching across nine chapters, beginning with the problem of definitions (religion, mysticism, secularism, religious studies) in chapters 1 and 2. Textualism, the relevance of the hermeneutic approach, and the emergence of Orientalism and Indology follow (chs. 3 and 4). Chapter 5 is devoted to the modern 'myth' of Hinduism, which paves the way for the 'discovery' by the West of 'mystic

Hinduism' (vedanta) (ch. 6) and Buddhism (ch. 7). Chapters 8 and 9 bring the work to a conclusion, looking beyond Orientalism towards a truly comparative perspective on intellectual traditions and an examination of 'the mutual imbrication of religion, culture and power'.

Orientalism and religion is a scholarly product of library research. It spreads out in many directions, but it must be said to the credit of the author that he never loses his way. The bibliographical riches of the book will, I am sure, guide many readers to works that they do not know of but could read usefully. The author's attentiveness to the work of Indian scholars is noteworthy. The strength of the book is also, perhaps, its weakness: there is a multitude of authorities and a surfeit of quotations resulting in a certain turgidity. Altogether, I have found this a rewarding book to read. I do not, however, agree with all the nuances of the argument, but that is only common. For example, contemporary historians of Hinduism tend to underplay the elements of common belief and practice that sociologists readily recognise in their monographic studies that are local or regional. King also suggests that the common elements that would justify the notion of a unitary Hinduism are actually an injection of Brahmanical ideas into other traditions. For a sociologist like the present reviewer, the notion of Hinduism as a family of religions is a legitimate and rewarding background for local ethnography. The trees have indeed grown into a wood, but this is not the place to develop this thesis.

Zavos's book deals with the late 19th and early 20th centuries and focuses on the emergence of Hindu nationalism. In my reading of it, the book is a useful supplement to King's, highlighting the important aspect of the times under study that the latter does not tackle. It is interesting to note that while Hindutva does not enter into King's book at all, Orientalism makes only a rare appearance or two in Zavos's. King's book is about varieties of discourse, some of which were employed in the construction of the idea of Hindu nationalism; Zavos is more interested in the phenomenon of Hindu nationalism rather than in the underlying/ accompanying rhetorics *per se*. He does take note of them, though, linking them to 'the struggle for dominance of ... mental frameworks on the discursive terrain of middle class Indian public life' (p. 9).

Further, he selects the notion of 'discourse of organization' to analyse his data on both colonial rule and the objectives and processes of Hindu mobilisation during the period under consideration. In the process, he clarifies the distinction between Hindu nationalism and Hindu communalism, considering the former a 'soft' term. I sympathise with Zavos's discomfort with the terminological flabbiness that is responsible for a great deal of 'double-think' in intellectual circles and 'double-speak' in political arenas. For him, while 'nationalism' is an ideology, communalism is a historical condition, but the two are of course mutually imbricated. The third factor in operation was, of course, colonial rule and its discourse of organisation.

Zavos does well to remind us that the modern beginnings of Indian secularism were the handiwork of British politicians who conceived of, and the colonial

officials who drafted, the Queen's Proclamation of 1858. Here it was clearly stated that it was the 'royal will and pleasure that none be in any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted, by reason of their religious faith or observances, but that all shall enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law', etc. (p. 35).

The Proclamation provides the backdrop for Zavos's discussion of the Hindu responses to the situation that gradually took shape in the country in the wake of the organisation of the new state and the disorganisation of society (ch. 2). As he puts it, 'Images of organization can be associated with the elements of state which effectively delivered the British challenge in [the] domain of culture; image of disorganization can be associated with elements of society which were perceived as definitive or essential to Indian culture. Hinduism, as a religious tradition and force in state-society relations, assumed a key position in this scenario' (p. 25). This, then, is the key idea around which Zavos constructs his narrative.

Hindu responses, he argues, can be said to have followed two routes which he calls 'vertical' and 'horizontal' organisation respectively. The argument is elaborated through particular cases, notably those of the Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharma movements. The Arya Samajis believed that Hindu society could be vertically restructured by transforming the nature of caste as a religious institution; the Sanatanis worked for horizontal solidarity on the basis of the existing caste order. Inevitably, these two positions shaped Hindu politics in the late 19th century and thereafter.

Zavos proceeds to give a detailed analysis of the interplay of religious symbols and political interests as illustrated by the cow protection and *shuddhi* movements (the 1880s onwards). The former was a case of horizontal organisation, the latter of the vertical (ch. 3). There were overlaps also. The early 20th century saw the emergence of the Hindu Sabha movement (ch. 4). Equally significantly, there was a close relationship between the politics pursued by Hindu organisations and that pursued by the nationalists. The Indian National Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha and their strategies are examined.

This prepares the ground for a discussion of the political discourse in the post-war years (chs. 5 and 6). Gandhi and his social and political concerns, the Moplah uprising, the Khilafat movement, Savarkar's concept of Hindutva, the founding of the RSS, mobilisation of the lower castes, etc., are all anlaysed. Limitations of space preclude a detailed consideration, but many of Zavos's conclusions are noteworthy. To give an example, he argues persuasively that the 'unproblematic catholicity' of Savarkar's concept of Hindutva, which embraced one and all, was a product, perhaps more of the incarcerated author's lack of awareness about the contemporary debates about the organisation of Hinduism than of his agnosticism (p. 180). The implication is that it was not firmly grounded. Zavos also presents an interesting comparison of the organisational patterns of the 'nationalist' and 'Hindu' movements, pointing out, among other things, that 'the adaptation of the *akhara* model in the RSS ... was an

appropriate form for an organisation which resisted the trajectory of Gandhian *ahimsa*' (p. 189). Along the way, interesting questions come up that Zavos himself does not always address. Thus, did the lure of *sangathan* (organisation) have something to do with Hinduism not being a congregational religion? The point is that the search for the collective—a Hindu community—had become increasingly imperative in the eyes of many Hindu leaders in the context of confrontational politics.

Taken together, King's and Zavos's books make for instructive reading. They illustrate the possibility of multiple readings of certain related historical developments, depending upon one's problematique and one's research objectives. In the process, our understanding of these developments—the course they take, and the long-term consequences they have—is deepened.

Institute of Economic Growth T.N. MADAN
Delhi

PETER GOTTSCHALK, *Beyond Hindu and Muslim: Multiple identity in narratives from village India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001. xviii + 215 pp. Plates, maps, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. Rs. 525 (hardback).

Peter Gottschalk has written an absorbing and at times subtle book exploring the modes of identity in a constellation of villages in western Bihar. Directed at contesting the picture of South Asian cultures as essentially religious—with the terms 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' marked out, Gottschalk reminds us, as descriptive adjectives and analytic categories—the work is an attempt to appreciate better the multiple identities (including religious identities) by which an individual associates with different groups according to social context.

The heuristic space occupied by the book is drawn from an informed appraisal of such theorists as Paul Ricoeur, Maurice Halbwachs and Paul Connerton, and devolves upon a concept of *group memory* to reflectively articulate the pasts and presents of the village area being studied. In an attempt to portray the various means by which group memory is systematised with strategies of authorisation, verification and transmission as remembered by individuals, Gottschalk examines various versions of the most commonly repeated narratives in the area. These narratives engage such themes as the founding and settlement of the village nexus by a Sufi and by Hindu and Muslim brothers, the role of the local Raja and the Delhi Sultan, the vengeance of a Brahman's ghost, and the coming of India's independence. An idea of identities nested within identities, as indeed a concept of nested territories, is invoked to supplement this axis of investigation. The nested territories postulated include household, neighbourhood, village, district, state and nation, while the participants' identities are seen to recrystallise in different forms around different issues (be it caste, class, gender, language and religion). The effort clearly is to track identities that both express and undermine the seeming unity of a broader identification. More particularly, the focus

comes to be on how popularly told narratives (either written or orally deployed) about oneself, the past, the local and historical personages that dot a landscape, the interests defining groups and so on, simultaneously reflect and construct the multiple group affiliations of those doing the telling. There is no attempt at providing a comprehensive ethnohistory of any particular area; nor is the concern with the historical veracity of the narratives themselves. Rather, they are approached in terms of their capability to act as a locus of group identity within individual memory.

Although the work is theoretically grounded and ethnographically structured, the chapters retain a clear coherence, both elaborating upon the theme of multiple group identities and restating the specific imperative of setting religious identity in its broader social context. Gottschalk is interested in asking how the nature of religious self-identification in South Asia has shifted historically—doubtless a concern accentuated by the recent increase in communal polarisation—but adds, ever so insistently, that the exclusive emphasis on religious community and thus religious division erases common and shared identities between groups. In opening up the various facets of group identity and the possibility of multiple identity among individual members, therefore, Gottschalk engages head-on with the possibility of Hindus and Muslims living not within discrete and distinct religious worlds, but practising faith lives that obscure clear identity boundaries.

I guess the specific relevance of the book's main title, *Beyond Hindu and Muslim*, derives from this engagement. However, as the brief foreword by Wendy Doniger makes clear, this study of the construction of Hindu, Muslim and other identities in India has important implications for our understanding of inter-religious cooperation and inter-religious violence; and that 'Gottschalk's work is about concepts of time and memory; he is searching for a constructive sense of history in the face of the formidable de(con)struction wrought by the Orientalist and subaltern critique'. For Gottschalk himself, it would be a mistake to pretend that political agents have full responsibility for contemporary religious identities and conflicts, for to do so 'is to deny the agency and self-awareness of political non-elites and to overlook the inherent potential for disagreement between groups with different or even conflicting notions and practices of belief, ritual, purity and the past.'

Clearly the centre of intellectual gravity has shifted, and though this question of the inherent potential for disagreement is crucial, no simple characterisation of it will do justice to the facts. Nor is there, strictly speaking, anything regrettable in the stance specified by Gottschalk apropos the space of Hindu and Muslim religious self-identification, namely that '*awareness of difference does not necessarily signal a context of conflict*' (emphasis in original). But it is worth stressing that the notion of difference, in this context, is doubly loaded: it suggests both internal validity and social effectiveness. The two of course do not necessarily or generally go together, although in the contexts surveyed they seem to do so.

But is the question one of getting at the specific imperative of fashioning a community's story through examples of 'Hindu-Muslim' hybridity? As the

historian Shahid Amin has recently emphasised, an exclusive focus on the syncretism of popular religiosity, without taking on board the narrative refashionings of conquest and sectarian strife that these invariably entail, misses out on the *process* through which India's vaunted composite culture was created. While this complicates the relationship between the 'facts of history', popular remembrance, and matters of belief and identity, hitching the relationship to the mnemonic devices through which popular assent is generated *across* religious divides defuses the ground somewhat. Gottschalk tends towards this in his attempt to confront the erasure of shared identities that results from the common scholarly focus on conflict instead of cooperation. It might be that Gottschalk's strategy is the sign of a concession to something shared much more than the expression of Hindu–Muslim hybridity. But paradoxically, the very memories and passions of the popular that Gottschalk's narratives from the field so richly suggest lead to a communal standoff. I am suspending for reasons of space the accompanying question of how much the ethnographic encounter itself has been productive of the narratives being examined. But if the presumed antinomy at the heart of this encounter—between, shall we say, 'looking for what?' and 'finding what?'—is any guide, then I guess Gottschalk has a lot of accounting to do for presenting his book as a movement *beyond* 'Hindu' and 'Muslim'.

All this is not to dismiss the argument of the book; only to suggest that the ethos of pluralisation pervading the pages of *Beyond Hindu and Muslim* is both an opportunity and a problem for a serious student of identity formation in India.

University of Hyderabad SASHEEJ HEGDE

NIRAJA GOPAL JAYAL and SUDHA PAI, eds., *Democratic governance in India: Challenges of poverty, development and identity.* New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001. 264 pp. Tables, notes, references, index. Rs. 495 (hardback).

The concept of governance is relatively new and increasingly popular. Talking in terms of governance replaces a more narrow focus on government, as the editors argue in their introduction. Governance is wider, as it includes spheres of regulation outside the realm of the state, namely those related to the market and civil society. This immediately points to the wider context in which we have to locate the conceptual shift: it is related to the fact that the state is losing, or has already lost, part of its privileged position and that the market and civil society have become more prominent. It is against this background that the book claims to focus on challenges of development, poverty and identity.

This is no doubt an ambitious and also very worthwhile endeavour. Seen from this perspective, however, the book as a whole disappoints somewhat. The main trends outlined in the (first part of the) introduction do not return sufficiently in the individual papers. The book misses a connecting thread that would bring

unity to the collection. Looking at the papers individually, however, the book is an interesting collection with many papers that are worth reading.

The book consists of two parts. Apart from the introduction by the editors, there are four papers in the first part on 'Governance, Poverty and Development', and five papers in the second part on 'The Politics of Identity'. Despite the emphasis in the introduction on the difference between government and governance, three of the four papers in the first part privilege the state in their discussion on governance. The exception is the paper by Bob Currie, which is a rather philosophical treatment of politics, governance, civil society and participation. Currie argues that, in order to understand the political conditions in which one can expect poverty reduction, one has to move beyond the frameworks of (good) governance or simple beliefs like 'the more participation the better', and instead, look at political cultures. The article is not about India, which is a pity, especially since Bob Currie has done very interesting earlier work on public action and the persistence of hunger in Orissa.

The other three papers of this first part of the book are all mainly about government, and, seen from the overall theme outlined in the introduction, it is regrettable that no papers are included on other forms of governance or public action and their relationship to poverty and development. Niraja Gopal Jayal discusses six different models that challenge the state at present, varying from proposals to roll back the state, to attempts to control it (as the Bahujan Samaj Party aspires to in Uttar Pradesh), to initiatives to partner the state (as in Joint Forest Management projects), or to decentralise it. Kuldeep Mathur discusses two different ways in which the developmental role of the state has been given concrete shape in India and in other parts of the developing world. In the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis was on strengthening a technically oriented, professional and ideologically neutral, development administration. The present discourse, however, emphasises 'state capacity' and 'good governance' as a way of converting a predatory and non-developmental state into a more developmental one. What I found interesting is that in different periods of time, the same international actors (Ford Foundation, UNDP, international donors) were involved in promoting these different models. The paper focusing most concretely on India's development and poverty problems is the one by Utsa Patnaik and Prabhat Patnaik. The issue of governance, in their paper, is dealt with in their discussion of the 'dirigiste' regime. Although this regime has its shortcomings, in their view it is not the main culprit for India's poverty and food insecurity, for which they point to the absence of an effective redistributive land reform.

The second part of the book has five papers on the politics of identity, that is, Dalit identity in four papers, and Oriya identity in one paper. Effectively this means that one of the main challenges to democratic governance in India, that of an increasingly assertive Hindu identity formation and mobilisation, is not discussed in the book. The papers are, again, quite diverse. Three papers are very broad in scope (although not all of them are equally ambitious): Eleanor Zelliot on possible sources of Dalit pride, Ghanshyam Shah on limitations of

the Dalit movement, and Aditya Nigam on the radical challenge of parts of the Dalit movement, in the sense that this movement no longer accepts the conventional leftist 'priority of evils' in which imperialism came first, and which tended to accept that the nation state is/was the best platform from which to fight imperialism. Two papers in this part of the volume discuss very concrete processes of identity formation in particular historical circumstances: Sudha Pai's paper on the BSP in UP and Jayanta Sengupta's paper on Oriya identity. Both are interesting and the latter is a welcome addition to the collection, since it focuses on elites, who, although they perceive themselves in this case as backward, pose as much of a challenge for democratic governance as the subaltern groups. So, given the main theme of the book, there are several missed opportunities, but there is enough substance in the papers to make it a worthwhile and interesting collection.

Centre for Economic and Social Studies JOS MOOIJ
Hyderabad

VIJAY PRASHAD, *Untouchable freedom: A social history of a dalit community*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000. xx + 176 pp. Plates, notes, epilogue, glossary, bibliography, index. Rs. 395 (hardback).

As a method of analysis and interpretation, social history has in recent years come to acquire a growing acceptance and visibility within both sociology and history. Vijay Prashad's *Untouchable freedom*, an engaging exercise in reconstructing the world of an untouchable social group, clearly belongs to this vein of scholarship. It seeks to illuminate the political and ideological practices of a group of sweepers and night-soil carriers working for the Delhi Municipal Corporation [DMC] over a period stretching from the closing decades of the 19th century to the post-independence decades.

By combining observations of the social structure with the collective memory of lived experience as articulated by the sweepers themselves, Prashad attempts to situate those critical elements of the past that have strategically influenced the sweepers' response to the present. While such attempts to articulate the 'subaltern voice' have often called into question dominant modes of thought concerning structure, agency and the place of the oppressed in Indian society, they have greatly enriched social science by problematising issues of poverty, domination, subjugation, emancipation and empowerment in a refreshingly different way.

This study foregrounds an issue that has attracted much political attention recently—the underlying factors that may possibly explain why Dalits were at the forefront of the anti-Sikh violence in Delhi following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Quite clearly, Dalit politics finds itself in a peculiar situation, with Dalits having allied with their erstwhile oppressors in the Hindu right in defending a faith that from the very outset has treated them as ritually defiling and socially outcaste. Such a political trajectory has led marginalised and

oppressed groups to join the ranks of right wing Hindu fundamentalist groups, often forming the most visible face of communal violence in contemporary India.

The story of these sweepers is steeped in a history of caste oppression and class exploitation, and in reconstructing it against the backdrop of the late colonial period, the nationalist struggle, and the early decades following independence, the author critically interrogates both colonial policy and its claims to modernity. More specifically, the book addresses the ideas and practices adopted by the British pertaining to urban sanitation, the manner in which nationalist elites across the political spectrum engaged with the vexing problem of untouchability, and the struggles of untouchable castes. The study also builds a narrative of the sweepers' struggle as understood by themselves, illuminating in the process a struggle for emancipation that is replete with betrayals, manipulations, and caste-centered opportunism, eventually culminating in their assimilation into Hindu majoritarian politics in the contemporary period.

How does a struggle for emancipation actually end up reproducing the very structures of domination? How does modernity reinvent forms of caste oppression within the structure of an emerging class society? How does the practice of emancipative politics become at the same time the practice of repression within democracy? These are some of the important questions that this study attempts to grapple with.

The DMC sweepers' struggle is built around key notions of identity which (in different ways and at different moments) represent specific sites of contestation and resistance. Each chapter of the book deals with a particular aspect of their identity which serves as a rallying point to construct a particular narrative history. This includes an account of how the particular identity comes to be associated with the sweepers' group, and how they engage with this identity both internally (as an ideological practice defining group solidarity and group mobilisation), as well as externally (to resist/build alliances with larger and more powerful social forces in both state and civil society). These identities—beginning with their caste identities as Mehtars and Chuhras, their occupational/class identity as sweepers in the DMC, and, finally, the identities of Balmikis, Harijans and Citizens—have their own specific vision of emancipation and function as ideological sites illuminating a complex caricature of 'Dalit' politics in an urban setting. In this sense, the critique of emancipation unveiled by the narrative constantly vacillates between the individual existential moment of resistance against an oppressive social structure, and the large historical memory which shapes the struggle as it moves from one decisive moment to the next.

The first two chapters of the book deal with the Mehtars and the Churhas and attempt to establish how the sweeper community of the DMC came into existence. At one level, Prashad deals with the process of institutionalisation and class formation that transforms these sweepers from their earlier role as neighbourhood sweepers to their new found positions as employees of a muncipal corporation. The history of the Churhas is traced back to the Punjab where the changed land

policies of the colonial rulers forced them into pauperisation, prompting many of them to migrate to Delhi and take up the occupation of sweepers. In the course of time, the Churhas as a caste came to monopolise jobs in the sanitation department of the DMC. It is in this capacity of the sweepers as a caste-cum-occupational-class group that the author attempts to understand the trajectories of their struggle for emancipation.

The sweepers of Delhi labelled as Mehtars were not an endogamous caste but rather a conglomerate of many caste groups essentially designated as untouchables, who all performed the work of sweepers. The Mehtars came to be regarded as the official sanitary cleaners of Delhi. The author clearly brings out the social dynamics underlying the changes in both the work structure and the employment patterns of the DMC, which transform the sweepers' resistance into caste hostility at the very moment that the occupational identity of Mehtars begins to translate itself into class action.

It is within this occupational community of sweepers that the Churhas are dominant, both in terms of numbers as well as the politics of the DMC sweepers. This peculiar caste-class positioning of the Churhas channels their struggles into both vertical and horizontal lines of action, a pattern that has become increasingly visible in the contemporary movements of the lower castes and untouchables.

In modern India's thrust towards urbanisation, public sanitation has always been a difficult if not controversial issue, given that untouchables continue to perform this task despite changes in technology and the social structure. The author's investigation into the colonial government's sanitation policy clearly shows that, despite the overriding claims about modernisation, it was actually economic considerations guised in a crude set of racist legitimisations concerning sanitation and cleanliness, which served as the basis for developing the sanitation system for Delhi. In the process, not only did the British reproduce caste ideology and discrimination within their own supposedly modern occupational hierarchy, they also cemented the forces of class exploitation by invoking an upper-caste and upper-class nexus in the provision of sanitary facilities.

In the final three chapters that deal with the identities of Balmiki, Harijan and Citizen, the study illuminates the contradictions and dilemmas that underlie the sweepers' quest for economic and cultural emancipation within an emerging democratic structure whose collective conscience continues to be deeply embedded in structures of caste domination and subjugation. At the same time, the narrative also brings out the complex nature of the forces acting upon the sweepers as they struggle for economic, political and cultural inclusion within the larger Hindu community. It appears that emancipation—or acceptance and inclusion within the larger community—can only be had in return for perpetrating violence on other marginalised groups, be it the Sikhs or the Muslims.

The contradictions that underlie this emancipative trap are traced by the author to the difficult and tenuous relations between the sweepers' identity as Balmikis

and Harijans and the dominant political ideologies of the mainstream Hindu polity. Constantly subjected to upper caste-class manipulation and subversion, the sweepers are the victims of their own exclusivist politics. During the 1930s, the Hindu Mahasabha, together with the active collaboration of philanthropic Hindus like the Birlas, set about building temples for the Balmikis, thereby creating the conditions for their re-entry into the Hindu fold. These calculated overtures of the Hindu Mahasabha in the early years of nationalist politics paid rich divedends, cementing a permanent bond between the Hindu right and the Balmikis.

This is no doubt a damning indictment of the mainstream nationalist polity and its claims to secular practice. It is equally revealing, however, about the secular elite's response to the struggle of the DMC sweepers and their understanding of untouchability. The issue gets most poignantly articulated in the way that the sweepers respond to Gandhi and Ambedkar. In the case of the former, the Mehtars are clear that, despite his Harijan policies and his paternalistic attitude towards them, Gandhi is unable to cross the critical threshold that separates them as untouchables from the rest of Hindu society. In the case of Ambedkar, while there is great empathy and solidarity with his radical critique of Caste and Hinduism, there is nonetheless a distancing due to Ambedkar's strategy of converting to Buddhism, as well as the perceived threat from the even larger untouchable caste of the Chamars, who were staunch supporters of Ambedkar. The Mehtars insist on their being Hindus, and their right to be included within the larger Hindu community. It is this sentiment of the sweepers that is so successfully manipulated by the Hindu right.

At yet another level, these is the relations of the Churhas with the Communists. Here again their experience of egalitarianism is marred by the Left's insensitivity to the problems of untouchability, and the betrayal and fragmentation of their labour unions under communist leadership, which sign deals that provide no visible gains for the workers. In the end, as the author suggests, it should not come as a surprise that these workers find greatest empathy and solidarity with an ideology that has successfully convinced them that their interests are none other than what Hindutva has always proclaimed.

Though this may look like false consciousness to some, the fact remains that secular and left ideologies have yet to evolve the strategies of cultural inclusion that are so very critical if the claims of the Right and their Hindutva agenda are to be contested by such marginalised groups. The struggle of the Churhas as Balmikis, Harijans or Citizens clearly illustrates how ideologies of emancipation can work towards the reproduction of the very structures of domination and oppression that they seek to liberate themselves from.

The failure of class consciousness and class solidarity as a mobilising force among the Mehtars is a critical issue that remains unanswered even in this narrative of the DMC sweepers' struggle. Yet, there is no doubt that such contributions, with their efforts to problematise the subaltern, have greatly enriched

our understanding of the analytical complexity of the social structure in modern Indian society.

St Xaviers College
Mumbai

EDWARD A. RODRIGUES

RANGANAYAKAMMA, *For the solution of the 'caste' question, Buddha is not enough, Ambedkar is not enough either, Marx is a must* (trans. from Telugu by B.R. Bapuji). Hyderabad: Sweet Home Publication, 2001. 421 pp. Rs. 80 (paperback).

Living in India, it is hard not to encounter caste in everyday life. Caste is a complex, discursive and value-loaded subject, and has been written about for more than a century—from the grand treatise of the Abbé Dubois to the general anthropology of Louis Dumont. Caste defines the core of Indian society and it is seen today as the major threat to modernity. The book under review is organised around the writings and theories of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who was a central figure in the 20th century history of Dalit liberation movements, as well as Dalit life. Ambedkar brought the problems of untouchablity to the notice of all people in the country. He moulded the struggle against this evil practice into a movement for political rights. He created the consciousness among the untouchables that they too have rights. The author begins by critically examining Ambedkar's writings and his new theories regarding the origins of caste, the Shudra varna, and of untouchability, but finds coherence and consistency in these theories. Throughout the book, the author suggests that Marx is a must for the solution of the caste question because the permanence of reservations implies the permanence of the caste system. She argues that we need a theory that frees lower castes from the exploitation of their labour, which is the core of caste system. Neither the continuation of reservations, nor the preachings of Buddha like Ashtang Marga will provide effective solutions to the problems of Dalits. In order to eliminate caste discrimination, it is necessary to abolish caste distinctions and practise castelessness and non-observance of caste.

This book provides a refreshing perspective on Ambedkar's writings and will interest activists and researchers alike.

Delhi School of Economics
University of Delhi

SATENDRA KUMAR

RUKMINI BHAYA NAIR, RAMNIK BAJAJ and ANKUR MEATTLE, *Technobrat: Culture in a cybernetic classroom*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997. 313 pp. Rs. 395 (hardback).

This book is an anthropological dissection of the classroom experiences of the author while teaching a humanities course on 'Culture and Technology' in the

Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. It is built upon ideology, memory and the personalised reconstruction of events in the class by the author. The author very meticulously captures the changing moods and emotions of the class, including its boredom, restlessness, curiosity and anxiety. It can be seen as a critique of technology, and as the self-analysis of IIT engineers. An engineer's physical environment and his evolutionary drive to succeed and conquer geographical, intellectual and moral spaces; his imaginary universe, with its dreams, fictions, jokes and conceptual toys, all give glimpses of the engineer's mind or the 'cyborg mentality'.

The topics that were discussed in the class ranged from culture to colonisation and from Gandhianism to consumerism. The views of prominent personalities from various fields like Gandhi, Nehru, Tagore, Aristotle, Marx and Engels, as also others like Escher, Alan Turing, Salman Rushdie, Donald Davidson, Bruno Latour, Ramchandra Gandhi etc., were part of the discussion.

The book aims at a quasi-anthropological representation of a rarely studied species, the 'technologist'. They carry aspirations shaped by Indian middle-class ideology and dream of being an IITian and then an NRI. The classroom could be seen in some ways as the microcosm of a middle-class Indian 'mind' attuned to the 'American dream'.

Institute for Social & Economic Change DEEPTHI S. ARADHYA
Bangalore

ROMILA THAPAR, *Cultural pasts: Essays in early Indian history*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000. xii + 1156 pp. Plates, notes, references, bibliography, index. Rs. 1550 (hardback).

Romila Thapar's writings have always reassured us of the fact that doing history by sketching only what is obvious in the sources needs no historian, whose professional task is to seek intellectual depth. *Cultural pasts* embodies some of her best pieces published in different journals, books and pamphlets over the past three decades. These essays are thematically sorted into nine sections—historiography; social and cultural transactions; archaeology and history; pre-Mauryan and Mauryan India; forms of exchange; of heroes and history; genealogies and origin myths as historical sources; the renouncer in a social context; and the present in the past. The assemblage impresses the readership with the author's up to date theoretical positions as well as substantive contributions to critical historiography and contemporary social theory, besides the methodological strategies for overcoming the problems of empirical research in early Indian social history.

The essays in the opening section seek to explain seminal questions about the determinants of the nature of historical consciousness and make original

contributions to critical historiography. They examine how the colonial comprehension of early and contemporary India influenced the ideas of Durkheim and Weber in relation to pre-colonial India, and the nature of the representational effect of colonialism and nationalism on Indian historiography. The other essays in this section cover diverse subjects, including: a methodological reappraisal of D.D. Kosambi's writings; the recent emergence of regional history in the wake of the re-discovery of regional identities; the taking root of the assumption that historical consciousness was absent in Indian societies; and how the Ladakh Chronicles acted as a major source of legitimacy of the ruling group. The essays in the section on social and cultural transactions deal with the 'oral and written', 'dissent and protest', and 'the image of the barbarian' in early India. Each of them demonstrates how certain dichotomies and categories (such as donor and donee, the oral and written, etc.) overtly and covertly function as encoded evidence of social change in the past, expressed in the form of a change in essential perceptions. The essays in the section on archaeology and history, despite their dated nature, withstand time by means of their hermeneutic depth. They exemplify how methodological insights of social theory help fruitful correlation of archaeological and literary data, and suggest the possibilities and lurking dangers thereof.

The theoretical insight, accessed mainly through Marxist methodology, that the state emerged only in a class-structured society and that it would be anachronistic to talk about the state in the context of non-stratified societies, has triggered deeper studies in the historical process of the evolution of political power. Thapar's essays in the section on 'Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan India' interact creatively with current social theories of the state. Nevertheless, a few essays in the section focus on more limited themes of the Mauryan period, such as Asoka's endorsement of Buddhism, and the extent to which the Asokan edicts embody the teachings of the Buddha.

The next section comprises masterly interpretations of socio-ritual institutions that are ostensibly non-economic, but perform vital economic functions in the circulation of wealth and services. The essay on *dana* and *daksina* (donations and sacrificial fees) shows that these are forms of exchange where tangible material wealth is exchanged for intangibles like status, religious merit and legitimacy. One essay is on economic exchange itself, i.e., the Roman maritime trade with South Asia. The author says that perceptions of the other can also form part of an exchange between those who make contact, the motivation for which may differ from group to group dependent on differing functions and negotiations. The essay on 'Indian views of Europe' analyses the representations of *Yavanas* in early Indian history; it is probably more suitable for the section on 'social and cultural transactions.'

The leading papers in the section entitled 'Of heroes and history' use mainly social scientific methods to investigate epic literature and suggest the potential role of such literature in historical reconstruction. The essay on 'The historian

and the epic', points out that 'the epic is essentially a literary crystallisation of the heroic ideal', and that 'therefore, it is not to be taken as factual evidence but as the representation of an ideal'. The essays in the section on 'genealogies and origin myths as historical sources' explain the various patterns in genealogies and their meanings. Thapar discovers a continuity between the genealogies of ancient heroes and dynastic lists, and analyses an origin myth that is associated with a number of dynasties quite distant from each other.

The essays grouped under the section 'The renouncer in a social context' offer social theoretical explanations for certain aspects of the social history of the Upanishads, the origins of the new ideological perspectives of 'the heterodox sects'; and their emergence to a hegemonic state towards the late first millennium B.C. An essay deals with one of the more central, unusual and paradoxical aspects of Indian religion, namely the social authority and power of the renouncer. Thapar historically links emergence of the renouncer in Buddhism and Jainism to some of the departures from Vedic ritual registered in the major Upanishads. Examining brahmanical and Buddhist traditions, Thapar shows that 'the *ashrama* theory may have been of an idealist abstraction projecting an ordering of the ideal life-cycle for the *dvija* and particularly for the brahmana, and more of the ventriloquism of a brahmanical perception of a time of troubles.' The last essay in this group suggests that millenarianism ostensibly involves 'groups led by persons using an apocalyptic vision and drawing on an ideology which anticipates a perfect future coming at a particular point in time through the intervention of the supernatural'. Thapar argues that this feature, often considered to be more appropriate to Christianity and Islam, was also present in some of the beliefs of Buddhism and Vaisnavism, though the apocalyptic allegories differed.

In the last nine essays under the theme 'The present in the past', Thapar is concerned about the way in which Indian history has been interpreted during the colonial period to encourage communal views of the past. As inquiries into the historiographically contingent origins of communalism on the one hand, and as a reinterpretation of the colonial historical interpretations on the other, the essays make lasting contributions to critical historiography. Aware of their epistemological relation to secularist politics, the essays empower society with critical consciousness based on the most relevant kind of historical scholarship. The last essay in the section (and the volume) is a powerful historiographical critique of the political appropriations of the theory of Aryan race.

These essays raise original questions about the institutional structure of early Indian society and lay bare the complex nature of social relations and processes. Thapar cannot be branded ideologically, and her standpoint and critical strategies have changed over the years. She has followed her own path, one that is self-reflexively mediated between constructionism and deconstructionism, enabling empirically-founded, creative responses to theories that are epistemologically unassailable. Every essay in the volume is a rebuttal of blind empiricism without theory as much as empty speculation without empirical research. Written in

elegant and powerful prose, Thapar's essays are eminently readable and ideally suited for both the general and the specialist reader.

Mahatma Gandhi University RAJAN GURUKKAL
Kottayam, Kerala

LIONEL CAPLAN, *Children of colonialism: Anglo-Indians in a postcolonial world.* Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2001. x + 261 pp. Map, notes, bibliography, index. £ 42.99 (hardback).

It is always a pleasure to read a new work by Lionel Caplan, who has consistently charted new courses in the anthropology of India. Steering clear of the rage to write on the intricacies of Hindu ritual and belief, he wrote on issues of conversion and Indian Christianity at a time when it was not the fashion of the day. The book under review similarly opens up a theme not often explored in the literature: Anglo-Indian history and ethnography.

Gaikwad's (*The Anglo-Indians: A study in the problems and processes involved in emotional and cultural integration*, 1967, London: Asia Publishing House) was perhaps the first systematic anthropological study of Anglo-Indians. N.P. Gist is also mentioned for his writing on the Anglo-Indians during this period. But the decades since appear to have seen little research in the area. C.J. Hawes may have reopened the field in the 1990s particularly from a historical perspective (see, for instance, his *Poor relations: The making of a Eurasian community in British India 1773–1833*, London: Curzon, mentioned in Caplan's book). Laura Bear's (1994) recent work (for instance, Miscegenations of modernity, *Women's history review* 3, 4: 531–48) is extremely exciting and one looks forward to more of her writing on the subject.

It is within this phase of revival of interest in the 'postcolonial condition' that Caplan locates his own volume on the Anglo-Indians, a 'racially' mixed population emerging out of sexual encounters between Indian and Europeans in the period of imperialism. Based on fairly lengthy field research in Madras, the book charts the history of the Anglo-Indians. This 'hybrid' group enjoyed protected status during the colonial period. Particular occupational niches were reserved for them, especially in the railways. The entitlements the Anglo-Indians enjoyed under the British were limited; the latter always sought to keep their distance from this métis population. For the Anglo-Indians, association and identity with the Europeans was emphasised much more during the colonial period, but the situation changed when it became clear that independence was under way.

At this time, and certainly after independence, the Anglo-Indian sense of belonging has been more 'fractured'. The economically disadvantaged, who also share socially and culturally in the world of the poor Adi-Dravida, may 'disappear' into the ranks of the latter, through marriage or co-habitation, losing their links with the Anglo-Indian community altogether. On the other hand,

they sometimes feel the need to tenaciously stress their Anglo-Indian linkage, perhaps, for instance, for the benefits of community 'charity' it offers. The Anglo-Indian elite, whose members are more often involved in marriages outside the community, and who have benefited from education and job opportunities after colonial rule, identify themselves almost unequivocally as Indian. They show contempt for those who seek to migrate out of the country and are comfortable with a 'nationalist' outlook and cosmopolitan life-style. The middle ranks of the Anglo-Indian community, largely artisan groups, tend to stress much more their European lineage. It is this group that suffered most from the ignominy of downward mobility after colonial rule, and it is here that one finds the greatest number of aspirants for emigration abroad.

Analysing kinship, marriage, dress, food and other expressions of culture, Caplan finds that these do not easily replicate European ways but are often strongly influenced by surrounding Indian practices. There are differences of status and class as well. Anglo-Indian practices, he argues, 'may be placed along a continuum, from cosmopolitan (or British, when referring specifically to colonial times) at one end, to "local Tamilian" at the other' (p. 219). Elite Anglo-Indians can be barely distinguished from Indians of the same social and economic standing. While there may be various positions in-between, the poor are also sometimes chastised for having lost culture by merging with the low-caste non-Anglo-Indian society around them.

Caplan offers the view that a 'creolist' perspective best illuminates the Anglo-Indian situation and history. Contemporary Anglo-India offers diversity in terms of ideas of belonging and in terms of cultural practices and values. Different sections of the community adopt life-ways that shatter notions of cultural 'boundedness' or homogeneity. The 'creolist' perspective recognises diversity and internal variation and explores changes over time as well as interactions across always porous boundaries much more sensitively. In other words, the exploration of the world of Anglo-India demonstrates that the colonial and postcolonial constitute a 'continuous political field' (p. 223). The boundaries between the two cannot be rigidly demarcated and the transition from the one to the other is characterised by flux, and by 'continuities and disjunctions' (p. 223).

The book merges past and present, history and ethnography with an effortless mastery that is not always easy to emulate. It explores with sensitivity the experiences and aspirations of a community so infrequently encountered in the anthropology of India. The book contributes to studies of colonialism and postcolonialism, 'race', and the drawing of community boundaries. One of the defining characteristics of the Anglo-Indians in the study is their religious identity as Catholics. In its analysis, therefore, the book also contributes to the scholarship on the varieties of Christian communities in south India and their relationships with each other.

Indian Institute of Technology ROWENA ROBINSON
Mumbai

CARLA PETIEVICH, ed., *The expanding landscape: South Asians and the diaspora.* New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1999. 230 pp. Notes, references, index. Rs. 450 (hardback).

AND

PARAMA ROY, *Indian traffic: Identities in question in colonial and postcolonial India.* New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1998. vii + 236 pp. Plates, notes, bibliography, index. Rs. 225 (paperback).

Social identity has been a subject that has received attention from scholars in the social sciences and humanities for a while now. While cultural studies has been examining historical documents and literary texts, social scientists have been doing field studies that focus on identity questions among various sections of people. The above two books have examined issues of social identity in varying cultural contexts using different methods and have dealt with the postcolonial condition in some original ways.

In *Indian traffic*, Parama Roy examines both colonial and postcolonial subjects ranging from Englishmen to nationalist Indian women. She draws on a variety of sources, including colonial archival documents, religious texts, travelogues, literary texts and films. Carla Petievich's edited volume is a contribution by scholars working on issues of identity in the South Asian diaspora. It is a combination of research by sociologists, anthropologists, historians, as well as experiential accounts by second-generation Indian-Americans. The concept of the nation undergoes different kinds of conceptual analyses in the two books. While in *Indian traffic*, the nation is undergoing the transformations that independence has demanded of it, in *The expanding landscape*, the diaspora perceives the nation in varied ways. Outside the subcontinent, the South Asian as a conceptual category signifies a market of identity in the diaspora.

Carla Petievich's collection emerged out of a conference at Columbia University and is structured around the themes of transnational identities, the recreation and reconstruction of culture in the diaspora, and the displacement of minorities such as Bangladeshis and Ahmadiya Muslims into other kinds of minority situations among dominant cultures. One of the central questions is: who defines and represents the myriad people, places, identities and other concerns implied by the phrase 'South Asian Diaspora'? The connections between diasporic experience and class, ethnicity, gender, generation and other social divisions are examined.

Usha Sanyal's article looks at how South Asian immigrant women identify themselves with the Islamic Circle of North America. Re-embracing Islam in a diasporic context is an empowering experience for these women. Karen Leonard's paper is part of her larger project on the Hyderabadi diaspora, which comprises people who are in Great Britain, the US and Australia. The paper focuses on how arranged marriages have undergone changes, but have remained central to

second generation Hyderabadis, who do not contest the concept, but are keen that the spouse be from the country of current residence rather than the place of origin of their parents. That immigration has gender, class and ethnic dimensions is explicitly underlined in a number of papers in the volume. Johanna Lessinger's paper about South Asians in New York City focuses on how people bring their class positions with them which in turn influence the networks that they form in the new country. Carla Petievich and Kathryn Hansen deal with the subject of cultural performances and festivals that are an integral part of the diasporic existence. There are different forms of Urdu **ghazals** and Carnatic music that become part of a transnational Indian culture which intertwines religion and ethnicity in an exciting fashion.

Traffic is a theme that is common to both books under review. The question of generation as well as multiple migration is tackled in many of the articles in Carla Petievich's collection. Parminder Bhachu examines the intersections between gender, class, multiple migrations, and multiple diasporas. The traffic between various diasporas, East African, British and then American makes the experiences of these multiple migrants quite unique. There are powerful communication networks among the different diasporas and the participation of women in the labour force, especially in countries like Britain, enhances their usage of the communication networks that are available to them. A panel discussion among graduate students, who are second generation Indian-Americans in anthropology and history at Columbia University, reveals questions of identity, location and cultural authencity.

While Carla Petievich's book relies on context, Parama Roy's book depends on texts. She draws on a variety of disciplines, media, and both colonial and postcolonial texts, which are literary, filmic, journalistic, archival, religious and popular cultural. In the first chapter, Roy examines the Englishman's desire to go 'native'. The next chapter discusses the discourse of the 'thugee', which centres around colonial roads, traffic and impersonation. The concept of hyphenated identities with regard to Anglo and Indian in Kipling's *Kim* is also examined. The concept of the Anglo male identity is carefully distinguished from the identity of an Englishman. While gender identity is absent in Kipling's work, Parama Roy examines the gendered subtext of Indian nationalism by looking at the relationship between three 19th century religious figures, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita. The next two chapters also look at nationalism and femininity by focusing on Sarojini Naidu's poetry, and the representation of Indian nationality through the roles played by Nargis and her own life and marriage to a Hindu male.

Parama Roy's book will make interesting reading for students in cultural studies, media and literary studies. Carla Petievich's contribution is relevant for studies in South Asian diaspora.

University of Hyderabad APARNA RAYAPROL

LEELA DUBE, *Anthropological explorations in gender: Intersecting fields*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001. 268 pp. Tables, figures, notes, references, index. Rs. 425 (hardback).

Gender in India is an important area of inquiry in the social sciences and social anthropology in particular. However, one rarely comes across works which not only address a wide range of issues but also handle them with insight and precision in the way this work does. What makes this book unique is Dube's ability to relate her anthropological experiences with her own life. In the introduction, a freshly written piece, she has contextualised her anthropological findings against the backdrop of her family background, childhood training and growing up experiences, using them as windows to gain an understanding of the gender asymmetry in a manner that is not only worth noting but also sets a new trend in Indian anthropology. In such an exercise, the distinction between professional and social life collapses, both merging into each other and helping Dube in her never ending quest for knowledge.

The book is a collection of six papers written by the author over a period of twenty-two years (1975 to 1996), and already published in different journals and edited volumes. The opening piece by Kamala Ganesh situates Dube's work against the backdrop of historical and contemporary developments in gender studies in India.

Ganesh highlights the vacuum that existed in the field of women's studies and anthropological studies of kinship after Iravati Karve, and maintains that Leela Dube 'has been a catalyst in the development of gender and kinship studies in India' (p. 15). As one of the first generation women scholars in anthropology, Dube was creatively engaged with issues of the inter-subjective construction of knowledge, at a time when social anthropology in India was still identified with the disciplinarian ethics of neutrality, objectivity, dispassionate observation, etc. She carried out pioneering research in the field of kinship, treating it not as mere esoteric entity but as an organising principle for the differential entitlement of members to the material and symbolic resources of the family. Such a way of understanding kinship provided an operational framework for gaining insight into the basis of gender asymmetry.

Her analysis of patriliny in terms of its diversities in the formal, temporal and spatial dimensions reveals important features about the relations between associated institutions. The varieties of kinship systems in India and South Asia point to the existence of alternative conceptions of gender and kinship in matrilineal and bilateral communities. Dube argues that the quality of gender relations and the position of women vary with the variation in the nature of the kinship system. Differences in kinship systems bring out variations in the principle of descent and social identity, residence and rights of living space, women's economic roles and control over property, attitude to female sexuality, conjugal relations and the character of marriage. In contrast to the rigid structures of patriliny, women are better placed in the other two systems. While matriliny provides

well-established rights and greater autonomy to women, bilateral societies have relatively more flexibility, choice and parity. Dube's effort is also commendable for attempting a more nuanced understanding of the patrilineal model, when she points out the existence of brideprice (in addition to dowry) within the patrilineal framework of social structure. Her approach remains essentially comparative in nature here, true to the anthropological tradition.

In the first chapter, 'Women's worlds: Three encounters', Leela Dube provides an introspective account of her fieldwork in three different settings among Gond women, in a Rajput village and in an island of Lakshadweep. She was exposed to different types of societies—a tribal community, a caste village and a matrilineal Muslim group at different points of her career. She has clearly examined how her age, sex, social connections, marital status, status as a daughter-in-law and as a mother, and degree of anthropological maturity and richness of life experiences have contributed to her confidence and contentment in fieldwork experiences. Dube's strongest point has been the balance in choosing the gender of key informants. Access to varied cultural information on the part of the local people is dependent to a great extent on their gender. Among the Gonds, the women were unable to give any systematic information about clan organisation, rituals and beliefs, economic activities and management of property and the tribal council in which they had no share (p. 70). A judicious combination of male and female informants appeared to be the best solution for her. At the same time, she highlights the natural advantage a woman fieldworker possesses. She has greater patience for the nuances of daily life and better situational ability, which are greater assets than any formal training in methodology.

The second chapter deals with socialisation of Hindu girls in patrilineal India with special reference to the construction of gender. Dube has relied on rituals and ceremonies, use of language, customary practices dealing with socialisation and maintaining social relations within and outside the family. The differential treatment of boys and girls while growing up in the natal home, construction of feminity in the pre-pubertal phase and after the onset of puberty, the idea of fortunate and auspicious women, feminity and sexuality in body, space and time, have received systematic treatment across different geographical and social space.

The chapter on 'Seed and earth' is one of Dube's popular articles which has been extensively quoted by social scientists in India and abroad. Using the metaphor of seed and earth, Dube attempts a cross-cultural examination of ethnographic data to substantiate the argument that man provides the seed, while woman stands for the earth. This symbolism not only exploits different roles of men and women in procreation but also other related issues such as the identity of the child, infertility, biological symbolisation of descent, the nature of relations between the sexes and their respective rights and positions.

The chapter on 'Caste and women' is an attempt to explore the relationship between caste and gender, with special reference to the way caste impinges on women's lives, and the role of women in maintaining and changing caste status

and relations. It is one of the few early attempts to systematically explore this relationship.

The next chapter, titled 'Who gains from matriliny: Men, women, and change on a Lakshadweep island', is a product of Dube's fieldwork in Kalpeni, one of the islands in Lakshadweep, where one of her Ph.D. students did fieldwork. Given her sharp anthropological insights into the working of matrilineal societies, Dube problematises the choices and gains that are made available to men and women in a changing society.

This book is an important contribution, relying on Dube's fifty years' training, not only as an anthropologist, but also, as a person with a gender-sensitive approach to issues like objectivity, the inter-subjective construction of knowledge, cultural and regional nuances, cultural metaphors, proverbs and folk songs. Her hold on gender and kinship is unparalleled. Her example is difficult to emulate, but any attempt to do so will surely not go unrecognised.

Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi

NILIKA MEHROTRA

MARTHA ALTER CHEN, *Perpetual mourning: Widowhood in rural India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000. xxxiv + 436 pp. Tables, plates, map, plates, notes, references, glossary, index. Rs. 625 (hardback).

Although the miserable life of the Hindu widow has occupied the consciousness of Indian society for more than 150 years on an intermittent basis, it is only in the last decade that serious scholarship has focused on her. This focus owes itself to Martha Alter Chen who edited a volume on the widow (*The Widow in India*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998) and has now provided us with a wide-ranging and finely worked account of what it means to be a widow in contemporary India. Thanks to such solid academic work, events such as the disruption of the filming of *Water* (Deepa Mehta's film on widows) cannot succeed in erasing the reality of the discrimination that the Hindu widow faces even today.

Chen's work has a solid basis in ethnography, statistical data, and analyses drawn from shastric texts as well as the work of a number of sociologists and feminist scholars. Chen has had the advantage of working with a scholar like Jean Dreze and a team of research assistants; this has made it possible for Chen to spread her work across many regions in both north and south India, enabling her to make useful points about the wide regional variations, not only according to caste, which other scholars have already drawn attention to, but also between caste practices and marriage practices in a given region. Thus, the single point agenda of male reformers in the 19th century—the remarriage of the high caste child widow—is analysed by Chen in the context of contemporary evidence. She provides a complex picture that takes account of variations in traditional caste norms caused by new castes seeking upward mobility (such as the *chandals*

in Bengal banning widow remarriage today for the same reasons which had prompted the intermediary castes to do so in the 19th and early 20th centuries). What is significant is that regardless of caste norms, reformist drives and enabling legislation, widows who remarry—or do not remarry—do so for a variety of other reasons—continuing stigmatising of remarriage, the fear of mistreatment of their children upon remarriage, and earlier bad marriages which act as a deterrent. When they do remarry, they do so mainly to avoid being landless single women with no access to livelihood. According to Chen, widows have formulated their own understanding as to which widows are likely to remarry and which not—one *nai* (barber) widow of Bihar stated that an upper caste widow would remarry if she had no children, a middle caste widow would remarry if she had only daughters, and a lower caste widow even if she had sons. As Chen argues, considerations of social status interact with considerations of social security—reflected in the number, age, and gender of children—to determine which widows remarry. An interesting point that emerges from Chen's evidence is that a widow's remarriage is negotiated by her parents if she is childless, and by her in-laws if she has children. What is striking to me is that the widow's sexuality remains under the control of kin even today.

Chen's account is happily not fixated on questions of remarriage, and it shows how the widow's unhappy situation is part of the continuum of discriminatory conditions for all women, though the widow might occupy the extreme end. The widow's stigmatised existence continues and we are told about a widow who was photographed initially in a red-checked sari and wanted to be re-photographed in a white sari because others had teased her for it. Sati is still seen by some widows as a way of quickly ending the hellishness of a living death.

On the other hand, deeply internalised values continue to make some women 'choose' tonsure even today because it is believed to be the shastric position. Among the most poignant and frightening statements that Chen makes is that for all the hype around the symbolic power of the chaste sati on the part of those guarding our 'traditions', more widows are murdered for a variety of reasons than supposedly immolate themselves. Even as recently as the year 2000 a widow of the Kargil war was murdered by her in-laws because she would not hand over the compensation package to them.

Given the range of discriminations and the vulnerability of the widow, who is mostly landless, or out of the workforce for reasons of caste status—Chen's examples include Rajput women, but also women from the upwardly mobile *chandal* caste—or because they are unskilled and unschooled, it is not surprising that widows experience higher than average levels of poverty and have lower than average consumption levels. It is also not surprising, then, that large numbers of widows seek employment as domestic labour, beg, become religious mendicants, or end up in prostitution. Chen uses the example of Methabai of Rajasthan (who has a small plot of land which she is struggling desperately to keep against the continuing violence she experiences at the hands of her in-laws) to show

that she is the unwilling 'victim' of the combined impact of social neglect and social norms; she then argues forcefully for public action. The widow's condition is not merely a private matter but is part of a wider social problem and, therefore, must be the focus of public intervention and policy.

Chen's work also draws our attention to the courage and the bargaining power of widows which help them survive their everyday oppressions. I have been travelling in Rajasthan recently and can report two new dimensions to the struggle for survival: among the sathins of the women's development programme there are a sizable number of widows who have become the instruments of a struggle of all women against violence and for social justice; widows have also formed what is called 'ekal nari' groups which provide support to each other. The government on its part should give up its ridiculous provision of withdrawing the widow's pension when her son becomes an adult, thus forcing her back into dependence upon a mostly unwilling son.

To sum up: I am partial to this book because I am partial to the widow. In addition, it is a solid and scholarly account of widowhood in India, one that was sorely needed.

Delhi UMA CHAKRAVARTI

MAINA CHAWLA SINGH, *Gender, religion and 'Heathen Lands': American missionary women in South Asia (1860s–1940s)*. New York/London: Garland Publishing, 2000. xiv + 393 pp. Maps, notes, appendices, bibliography, index.

It is often the case that histories of the missionary enterprise in India are either completely dismissive of missionary work, or are full of uncritical praise for the great role played by the missionaries in the field of education and medicine. However, Maina Chawla Singh, in her account of the work done by the American women missionaries, argues in favour of a 'textured critique' of missionary work. Bearing in mind that the missionaries operated within the context of the orientalist rhetoric, and that their mission to save was also part of the civilising mission, she successfully provides a more nuanced history of American women missionaries in India.

In my view, one of the most significant achievements of this book is its ability to question the unambiguous use the term 'missionaries' finds in many contemporary accounts of the work of the missionaries. By introducing the question of gender, it forces the reader to acknowledge that, in spite of the similarities in their tactics and mode of operation, the missionaries coming from different denominations formed a heterogeneous group. Even as we recognise patterns in the work done by missionaries coming from different denominational backgrounds and different countries, a close reading of the missionary documents reveals the gendered texture of the whole enterprise. Like many other institutions of the period, the missionary organisations were patriarchal structures that

initially had no intention of creating an independent category of women missionaries.

The book carefully lays out the difference between the missionary wife, and the single woman missionary who was often referred to as the Miss-Sahib. How did the presence of these women missionaries change the structure and hierarchies within the patriarchal mission societies? The early women on the scene were the wives of the missionaries who were expected to be both 'good Christian wives, and mothers' and also impart Christian gospel to the 'heathen women' especially to those who 'languished' in the zenanas. It was only in the second half of the 19th century that the first unmarried young women started arriving at the various mission stations and contributed in a significant manner to the missionary enterprise by functioning as teachers and doctors.

The author draws our attention to the manner in which a certain discourse about the 'heathen woman' was actually helpful in organising groups of women who raised money to support women who would go independently to mission stations and start schools, or help in the medical ministry of the mission agencies. Rather than see these women missionaries as agents who tried to change the lives of other women, the argument here is that the rhetoric of the other also created opportunities for these women to professionalise themselves and to go in search of new tasks. Even as they asserted their commitment to the Christian task of training 'good wives and good mothers', they had inadvertently subverted the existing family structures by remaining single.

A large number of missionary texts are analysed by the author in support of this argument. In addition to the missionary reports and books written by and about the missionaries, she uses another important source of information: the letters written by these women missionaries. These are the texts that reveal how it was not always the 'heathen woman', her customs, her jewellery and her 'ignorance' that got described. The letters also indicate how on many occasions the missionary woman herself becomes the object of description, when she reports the comments that were made by the 'native' women about her, her appearance, her use of the local language, and her teachings.

Drawing our attention to these subtly subversive moments in these documents is a necessary step for Chawla, as she tries to argue that in any missionary encounter it is important to take into consideration the cultural contexts of the sending culture as well as the receiving cultures. She uses the term 'cross-cultural' to describe these encounters and draws on the example of two missionary women who interpreted the message of Christ beyond the category of conversion, and established colleges and a hospital whose beneficiaries were not merely Christian women. The examples given are those of Isabella Thoburn who started one of the first women's colleges in Asia, and Ida Scudder (who was one of the earliest trained women doctors of the United States of America), who started the Vellore Medical College and Hospital. These women are shown to be not just altruistic missionaries, but visionary women who were able administrators, good at fund-raising and courageous in carrying out their convictions.

In her last chapter, the author includes as 'living voices' the old students of two institutions—Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, and Kinnaird College, Lahore—as those who inherited the legacies of the cross-cultural work done by the missionary women. While this last section, which draws its conclusions from questionnaires and interviews, is interesting in itself, it is not quite clear how it connects to the rest of the book. It is true that this section is meant to substantiate her arguments about the 'cross-cultural' nature of the missionary enterprise and also to affirm that all activities of the missionaries were not aimed at conversion. However, this version of the story of the 'receiving culture' limits itself only to the experience of students who generally came from the middle-class, elite sections of the society.

Chawla Singh's claim that in addition to recovering women's roles, the book 'primarily addresses questions of feminist *historiography*—which *include* the history of women, but complicate it with issues of gender and sexuality on the one hand, and race, culture, and power, on the other', cannot be completely justified because of this limitation. Who were the other 'native' women who came into contact with these women missionaries? For example, a number of references have been made in the book to the Bible women who accompanied the missionary women as they tried to establish contacts with the native women who were in the zenanas. What role did they play in this 'cross-cultural' game? An attempt to broaden the idea of the 'receiving culture' by including these different kinds of women and analysing their subjectivities would have enriched a work which already suggests a new approach to the gendered history of the missionary enterprise.

Finally, a word on the use of the term 'South Asia': Though there are scattered references to missionaries who went to China, and a section on Kinnaird College, Lahore, in almost the whole of the book 'South Asia' appears to be interchangeable with India. Is this one more instance of India dominating the scene of South Asian studies?

Centre for the Study of Culture and Society MRINALINI SEBASTIAN
Bangalore

SARAH CALDWELL, *Oh terrifying mother: Sexuality, violence and worship of the goddess Kali.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999. xviii + 320 pp. Figures, map, notes, references, glossary, index. Rs. 575 (hardback).

Going beyond the postmodern concern for reflexivity in ethnography, this study makes a strong case for the anthropologist's unusual immersion and psychological transference into the philosophical and experiential reality of the religious experience of another culture. It is an exploration of the religious, spiritual, philosophical and performative nuances of *Mutiyettu*, a form of worship theatre dedicated to the deity *Bhagwati* in Kerala. An attempt is made here to use personal experience as method and data in the making of ethnography. Two stories are

constantly being told here, using psychoanalytic feminist analysis of an all-male performance. Examining powerful gender imageries, this work raises controversial and provocative questions about the anthropologist's relationship to a supernatural subject, anchored along the contours of power, wealth and knowledge.

This is a story of the encounter between *Bhagwati* the deity, drama, and people. Deity worship implies many different things to people. Ancient south Indian cults of possession, bloodshed and sexuality intimately linked to agricultural fertility resonate in *Mutiyettu*. Also the symbolism of *Bhagwati* encompasses complex meanings of local motherhood, child rearing practices and emotional states. She is an icon of power, and a philosophical category, who is worshipped out of fear and anxiety, thereby constructing woman in a negative image. Her worship is dominated by men, and women are excluded and alienated through practices of social control. Nevertheless, the author argues for an open-ended, contextual appreciation of meanings.

Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi
NILIKA MEHROTRA

BISWAMOY PATI and MARK HARRISON, eds., *Health, medicine and empire: Perspectives on colonial India*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2001. x + 408 pp. Notes, bibliography, glossary, index. Rs. 600 (hardback).

This volume comes at a juncture when medicine and public health issues in colonial historiography are being researched from a variety of intellectual and cultural perspectives. Pati and Harrison's selection of essays reflect this range of perspectives. The book includes historical essays, case studies of medical institutions, analyses of medical policies and the politics of epidemics, disease and colonial administration. Broadly, the essays explore the relationship between medicine and imperialism and in the process, interrogate the nature of imperialism itself. They also open up spaces to view the many ways in which the colonised used, co-opted, resisted or collaborated with the project of western medicine.

The book consists of ten essays, preceded by a comprehensive introduction. Reviewed against the backdrop of existing scholarship on medicine and empire, Pati and Harrison raise some new issues, interrogate prevailing conceptualisations and suggest new areas for investigation in the area of health, medicine and empire. For instance, they argue that it is reductive to view the colonial medical establishment as a monolithic structure owing to its interrelatedness with local constituencies. They underscore the need for further research on the impact of colonial rule on indigenous medicine, and the entry of Indian practitioners into western medicine (the 'Indianisation' of the colonial medical establishment, especially after the 1910s). The editors also underscore another issue: that sanitary

and medical policy in British India was often less coercive than in the princely states—be it the issue of sanitary taxation, coercive vaccination policies or the forced takeover of land for building hospitals and so forth. Given such unevenness, Pati and Harrison question the very conceptualisation of 'colonial medicine' and argue for an expanded paradigm of 'medicine in the colonies', which makes space for the contradictions within the colonial medical regime as well as the agendas of local interest groups.

The issue of missions and medicine is explored in two essays. While Kakar's essay touches upon missionary interventions in leprosy, Fitzgerald's essay spans a wider terrain demonstrating how care, cure and Christianisation were all intermingled. Fitzgerald argues that medical missionaries adapted their medicine and their evangelism to suit their immediate cultural environment.

Three studies take up the theme of essentially problematic medical institutions—two mental asylums and a leprosy asylum. Waltraud Ernst examines the Madras Lunatic Asylum—a privately-run 'madhouse'. Originally founded (1794) to accommodate Europeans of all classes and Indians, Ernst traces its decline to a 'low priority' institution, finally shut down a century after its establishment. Ernst thus demonstrates how the history of the asylum reflects the shifting nature of imperial priorities. James Mills' 'Indians into Asylums: Community Use of the Colonial Medical Institution in British India, 1857–1880' examines the interaction of the local Indian community with a British medical centre: the Lucknow Lunatic Asylum. Mills argues that despite the disciplinary nature of such a project, the asylum became a survival strategy for a motley group consisting of errant minors, the homeless poor and other 'useless members' from the local community. The 'colonial' space of the asylum was thus reshaped and 'colonised' to suit local community concerns. Sanjiv Kakar's essay focuses on inmate unrest and protest in a Leprosy Asylum—another interesting space to examine the sociological implications of (and indigenous responses to) disease, therapeutics and the institutionalisation of medicine. Kakar underscores the need to acknowledge and understand subaltern resistance and agency within colonial medical institutions.

Sanjoy Bhattacharya's 'Re-devising Jennerian Vaccines...', analyses how the vaccination programme was plagued by a host of infrastructural and distribution problems which marred its success. This marks a shift from earlier formulations, which tend to suggest that the poor records of vaccination programmes were grounded in subaltern resistance to European medicine.

Two case studies examine colonial interventions in addressing cholera and plague epidemics at pilgrim centres. Biswamoy Pati's meticulously researched study on the urbanisation of Puri, and its growth as a pilgrim centre provides a window into the debates and the interventions of a 'weak, indecisive (and) contradictory' colonial health establishment over the 19th century. Manjari Kamat's essay on 'The *Palkhi* as Plague carrier' complements Pati's study by examining

two fairs at Pandharpur in Maharashtra. Kamat underscores how epidemics at pilgrim fairs reveal the complex inter-working of the colonial health establishment with railway companies, priestly families and local interest groups, which profited from pilgrim taxes and often resisted public health restrictions at pilgrim centres. This essay also displaces simplistic formulations of local resistance and colonial coercion.

Neshat Quaiser's study examines the attempts within Unani medicine to resist the hegemony of western medicine. Quaiser's argument that within the nationalist discourse, neither the Congress nor the Muslim League strongly encouraged Unani, reveals some problematic dimensions of indigenous medical initiatives. At another level, Anil Kumar's discussion of 'The Indian Drug Industry under the Raj' emphasises that the colonial practice of exporting raw materials and importing finished goods effectively stunted indigenous enterprise in the chemical and pharmaceutical sectors, except when the exigencies of the First World War provided unforeseen (perhaps unintended) opportunities.

Overall, this anthology makes an important contribution to the scholarship on the historiography of health and medicine in colonial India. The significant departure in the overall thrust of this book lies in introducing new perspectives on how 'indigenous peoples co-opted "imperial" medicine and adapted it to their own requirements' (p. 2); and how the complex coloniser/colonised dynamic of collaboration/connivance reminds us that medicine in the colonies followed many diverse and uneven trajectories. Also, indigenous initiatives like Unani or, later, the Indian drug industry, provide yet another perspective to understanding the cross-cultural nature of such medical endeavours as they evolved in British India and during postcolonial decades.

In this sense, Pati and Harrison's anthology is a timely intervention and broadens the scope of the frameworks within which medicine in the colonies needs to be examined in future research. Notwithstanding the multi-faceted approach, however, one does notice that gender hardly figures in these discussions, although public health issues, epidemics and even the politics of disease at pilgrim centres must have had gender dimensions. Perhaps the studies here may stimulate interest in exploring how these issues of health and medicine impacted differently on the lives of men and women in colonial societies.

College of Vocational Studies MAINA CHAWLA SINGH
University of Delhi

MINNA SAAVALA, *Fertility and familial power relations: Procreation in south India.* Richmond, Surrey (UK): Curzon Press, 2001. xvi + 239 pp. Tables, figures, plates, notes, references, appendices, glossary, index.

Demographers and social scientists have come up with a range of explanations for the observed regional differences in the level and the pace of fertility decline

in India. The differentials have been examined for statistical association between fertility and economic factors such as wealth and poverty, social factors such as education and women's autonomy or agency, exposure to media and communication networks, etc. In recent years, anthropologists have entered the arena by going beyond the observed statistical associations and posing 'why' and 'how' questions using ethnographic tools. Questions such as: why do women want to learn to read? and how does exposure to schooling in younger ages help women and men make choices regarding the number of children to have later in their life? Such questions cannot be explored easily and in-depth in population based surveys. Quantitative surveys need to be supplemented by textured material to gain insights into the motivations of people.

Minna Saavala's book, based on her Ph.D. research conducted through participant observation in three villages of one panchayat area in coastal Andhra Pradesh, offers an interpretation of the socio-cultural changes in which fertility decline is embedded. She explores the motivations underlying fertility decline by examining women's agency with regard to childbearing, emerging social and cultural processes, and the likely consequences of fertility decline for the household.

In spite of early and universal marriage, young women in Andhra Pradesh have brought their fertility down through sterilisation. No doubt, the government's vigorous family planning programme has made access to sterilisation easy and virtually cost free. But Saavala's several lengthy interactions with her respondents has led her to suggest that women in Andhra Pradesh are not accepting sterilisation because cash compensation is offered to them, nor because they have acquired modern values or individualistic conception of selfhood. The conjugal relations or communication between husband and wife are also not of any importance in motivating women to undergo sterilisation. The young rural Andhra women are willingly undergoing sterilisation in order to gain prestige in the way that it is culturally defined. By defying and undermining the authority of elders in the natal family, young women can improve their relative position vis-à-vis their mothers-in-law and use unequal intergenerational power relations to their advantage. Also, in the process their esteem in the peer group is enhanced. Given the prevailing kinship structure in south India, women are able to derive support for their decisions and actions from their own mothers.

While interpreting the acceptance for sterilisation in this framework, Saavala also explored with her informants several social, cultural and economic processes that have helped change the perceptions of fertility among women and men in rural Andhra. She observed that young couples have heightened expectations and aspirations for their children, leading them to desire fewer children, so that they can provide 'nourishment'—a term used in a broad sense to include not only food, but also provision of clothes, medicine, education and even dowry. People have begun to perceive changes in their immediate environment and are able to conceptualise an alternative to bearing several children. Economic and

social mobility has become possible for many due to schooling, and has encouraged people to ask for governmental benefits. Incidence of child mortality has been reduced due to better health care. Family planning methods are easily available. There is the possibility of migration to urban areas and the emergence of political movements has enabled even the traditionally downtrodden to gain confidence. And finally, the advent of mass media has brought new ideas about consumption to the villages.

The norm of fewer children is spreading across all strata of society, and within each substrata, among all families. When some people of humble social origin are able to improve their economic position or social value by having few children on the one hand, and taking advantage of the emerging opportunities on the other hand, the other members of the caste group perceive that these changes are in the realm of possibility and can be realised in their own lifetime. The message of the small family norm is thus diffused across economic and social classes.

Saavala, however, is aware that declining fertility is not without some undesired consequences. For example, she found that fertility aspirations are changing without filial care in old age being replaced by any other form of social security. Instead of procreating in order to secure their own future, parents are preferring to give importance to the quality of the present and near-future lives of their children and the focal point of consumption in families has turned towards the younger generations. Consequently, older widowed women may suffer in the emerging social situation when fertility is low.

Another consequence of low fertility would be a decline in marriages between cross-cousins and between maternal uncle and niece because there will not be a large-enough pool of related men and women of the right ages between whom marriages can be arranged. In the south Indian setting, declining fertility can work against women's interests and their position in the kinship system, since they derive structural benefits from the practice of cross-cousin marriage.

This book is an important contribution and addition to the growing body of textured material (along with the anthropological writings of the Caldwells on Karnataka and the Jefferys on Uttar Pradesh, among others) that attempts to explore why fertility in some pockets of India began to decline in the near absence of many of the traditional factors associated with decline, and what motivates couples to limit the number of children they have. To fully comprehend demographic transition, especially in developing countries, one must go beyond statistical associations and explore how and why people make certain choices in the context in which they live. Saavala's book eminently fulfils this objective. Although the book could have benefited from editorial inputs, the arguments and narration do flow smoothly and keep the reader engaged. It will be a valuable addition to the literature on India's demographic transition.

Gujarat Institute of Development Research LEELA VISARIA
Ahmedabad

DENNIS B. MCGILVRAY, *Symbolic heat: Gender, health and worship among the Tamils of south India and Sri Lanka*. Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd. (in association with University of Colorado Museum, Boulder), 1998. 72 pp. Plates, bibliography. Rs. 295 (paperback).

The book is a collection of seventy-three photographs accompanied by a brief commentary on each of these by McGilvray. These sharp and colourful photographs depict diverse aspects of Tamil life in India and Sri Lanka that portray a common theme—'symbolic heat'. The Tamil Hindus believe that this concept of physical and spiritual heat is a female energy that not only influences their everyday life, but also transcends into the realm of religion. The female energy, which is hot and active, provides energy and substance to the cosmos while the male principle, which is cool and passive, gives the form and substance to it. This division between hot and cold characterises the food that is consumed, colours that are worn, deities that are worshipped, and even the life-cycle rituals. The village goddess is considered as a female deity who is hot and, therefore, placated and calmed with white flowers, coconut and margosa leaves, which are cooling. Health, too, lies in the restoration of the balance between hot and cold elements. This helps make explicit the relationship between the fundamental principles of Ayurveda and the wider culture. 'Symbolic heat', the single guiding force that governs Tamil life, has been portrayed in an interesting and a novel fashion. A colourful and picturesque book worth glancing through.

Janki Devi Memorial College RUBY BHARDWAJ
University of Delhi

K.C. ZACHARIAH and S. IRUDAYA RAJAN, eds., *Kerala's demographic transition: Determinants and consequences*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997. 367 pp. Tables, notes, references, index. Rs 450 (hardback).

This book on Kerala's demographic transition is a collection of edited papers by eminent scholars in the field. The book merits the attention of scholars because Kerala is the first state in India to achieve replacement level fertility. It may be considered a model for the other states to follow. Part one describes the process of demographic transition since independence. The first article reveals that Kerala did marginally better than India in mortality transition due to better literacy, while fertility decline has been explained by diffusion theory. Studying demographic transition in response to the official policies and programmes, K.C. Zachariah notes that fertility decline in Kerala was caused as much by historical developments as by recent policy interventions. Two articles are devoted to mortality and fertility transition based on different data sets.

The three articles in Part II study the determinants of demographic change: two are on the determinants of fertility, while one deals with age at marriage. In Part III, the consequences of demographic change have been studied in terms

of the implications for the labour force, age at maternity, birth weight and nutritional care for pregnant mothers, population ageing and inter-regional comparisons. In Part IV, one article deals with internal migration from Travancore to Malabar, and the other two are devoted to the economic and social consequences of international migration.

Institute of Economic Growth
Delhi

R.P. TYAGI

JUDITH LORBER, *Gender and the social construction of illness*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997. 147 pp. Tables, notes, references, index. $35.00 (hardback)/$17.95 (paperback).

This book is part of the 'Gender Lens' series and its six well-structured chapters make a plea for levelling the hierarchies and inequalities in medicine by adopting feminist health care practices.

The first chapter, 'An overview', deals with gender and the social construction of illness. The second, 'Women get sicker, but men die quicker' provides a gender dimension to social epidemiological rates of death and illness. Third chapter, 'The doctor knows best...' analyses how the medical system structures professional interaction with women and men patients differently. The fourth chapter, 'If a situation is defined as real...' illustrates the ways in which premenstrual tension and menopausal mood swings are socially and medically constructed. Chapter five, 'A modern plague...', examines AIDS as an epidemic that is affected by gender in its transmission and treatment. The sixth chapter, 'Treating social bodies in social worlds' advocates understanding patients' social and environmental contexts and the history of the particular disease. It ends by sharing a proposal for feminist health care to empower the powerless consumers.

This book has interesting insights and is recommended not only for medical professionals, sociologists, anthropologists and historians, but for all those interested in social change.

Maitreyi College
University of Delhi

MALA KAPUR SHANKARDASS

SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER
2003
VOLUME 37 • NUMBER 3

Contributions to Indian Sociology

Contributions to Indian Sociology is sponsored by the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, and published by Sage Publications, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, CA, and London—in February, June and October. Copyright © Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi All rights reserved. No portion of the contents may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the publisher.

This journal was founded by Louis Dumont and David Pocock in 1957 but ceased publication in 1966 The new series was started the following year as an annual publication, was published biannually from 1975 to 1998, and became a triannual publication from 1999

ISSN: 0069–9667

Subscriptions: Regular institutional rate is Rs 940, £109, $174. Individuals may subscribe at a one-year rate of Rs 520, £38, $61. Single copy Rs 375, £37, $59 (institutions) and Rs 210, £14, $21 (individuals). For orders from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, SAARC rates apply—institutional sub-scribers $34 per year, single issue $14; individual subscribers $22 per year, single issue $11 Orders from the Americas should be sent to Sage Publications Inc, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320, USA (Tel: 00 800 818 7243/00 805 499 9774/e-mail: order@sagepub.com). Orders from the UK, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Australasia should be sent to Sage Publications Ltd, 6 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PU, UK (Tel: 00 44 20 7374 0645/Fax: 00 44 20 7330 1200/e-mail. subscription@sagepub.co.uk).

Postage: Subscribers in India, Nepal and Bhutan: please add postage of Rs 75 at the rate of Rs 25 per issue. This rate covers ordinary post, local couriers and hand deliveries. Delivery by registered mail or by out-station courier will be charged on actuals. Subscribers in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and other neighbouring countries: please add postage of US $6 at the rate of US $2 per issue.

Back Issues: Information about the availability and prices of back issues may be obtained from the publishers

Inquiries: Address all permission requests and subscription correspondence to Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, B-42, Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi 110 017 (Tel/Fax: 91-11-26491290/e-mail: sage@vsnl.com or journalsubs@indiasage.com). Inquiries from the Americas should be sent to the California address (above), while those from the UK, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Australasia should be sent to the London address (above). For the editorial office, see inside back cover

Authorisation to photocopy items for internal or personal use of specific clients in the United States of America is granted by Sage Publications Inc. for libraries and other users registered with the Copyright Clearance Centre (CCC), Transactional Reporting Service, provided that the base fee of (US) 25 ¢ per copy page, is paid directly to CCC, 21 Congress Street, Salem, Massachusetts 01970, USA (0069-9667/83$.25x.10)

Advertising: Current rates and specifications may be obtained by writing to the New Delhi office (address above)

Claims: Claims for undelivered copies may be made no later than three months following the month of publication. The publisher will supply missing copies when losses have been sustained in transit and when reserve stocks will permit

Change of Address: Four weeks' advance notice must be given when notifying change of address. Please send the old address label to ensure proper identification Please specify the name of the journal and send change of address notification to the Sage office through which you subscribe to the journal.

This journal is abstracted or indexed in **Current Contents/Social and Behavioural Sciences, Social Sciences Citation Index, ICSSR J. of Abs. and Rev. in Sociol. and Soc. Anthrop., Sociological Abstracts, International Current Awareness Service: Sociology, ASSIA: Applied Social Sciences Index & Abstracts, Anthropological Literature: an Index to Periodical Articles and Essays, Anthropological Index Online** and **Elsevier Geo Abstracts.**

Microform editions are available from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-13460.

Sage Publications
New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

Contributions to Indian Sociology

New Series

Volume 37 | Number 3 | September–December 2003

CONTENTS

Space, location and identity

K.L. SHARMA — The social organisation of urban space: A case study of Chanderi, a small town in central India — 405

RAJKISHOR MEHER — The social and ecological effects of industrialisation in a tribal region: The case of the Rourkela Steel Plant — 429

VINEETA SINHA — Merging 'different' sacred spaces: Enabling religious encounters through pragmatic utilisation of space? — 459

SIPRA TENHUNEN — Culture and political agency: Gender, kinship and village politics in West Bengal — 495

Book reviews and notices — *see page* 519

Index to Vol. 37 — 553

Contributions to Indian Sociology

Contributions to Indian Sociology (new series) is primarily a forum for the presentation of research studies on South Asian societies and cultures and for the discussion of different approaches to their study. Occasionally papers dealing with themes of cross-civilisational significance, bringing in data from non-South Asian societies, are also published. The journal does not generally accept purely theoretical essays or ethnographic surveys but favours papers in which theory and data are mutually related.

EDITORS
Dipankar Gupta, *Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi*
Patricia Uberoi, *Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi*

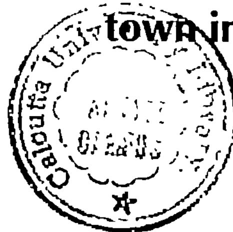
REVIEW EDITOR
Satish Deshpande, *Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi*

EDITORIAL ADVISORS
André Béteille, *Delhi*
Jan Breman, *University of Amsterdam*
Veena Das, *John Hopkins University, Baltimore*
Jayant Lele, *Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario*
T.N. Madan, *Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi*
Jonathan P. Parry, *London School of Economics and Political Science, London*
Michael Roberts, *University of Adelaide, Australia*
Thomas Trautmann, *University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*
Francis Zimmermann, *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris*

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Aradhya Bhardwaj

Please note that all editorial correspondence should be addressed to:
The Editors
Contributions to Indian Sociology
Institute of Economic Growth
University Enclave
Delhi 110 007, INDIA
E-mail: cis@ieg.ernet.in
Fax: (91-11) 2766 7410

The social organisation of urban space: A case study of Chanderi, a small town in central India



K.L. Sharma

Space and status are inextricably related to each other Though space is a geographic entity, human society has a tendency to transform it into a socio-cultural phenomenon. Such a process of appropriation of space refers to trends of social change and status-formation. Space-segregation thus implies 'social distance'. Underlying a given space-segregation, one can see the structure of society in terms of the ramifications of caste, class and ethnicity. Our study of Chanderi, a small town in Madhya Pradesh, shows that segregated mohallas *(neighbourhoods) and* galis *(lanes) largely correspond with graded social divisions based on caste and community. Space-segregation and commensurate social divisions do not obstruct the incorporation of modernity in the social fabric of the town.*

Our study also shows that space is not static. It is made and remade in accordance with the dynamics of social relations and status-formation. Since space is social, it is appropriated by the privileged sections of society to their advantage. As such, tradition has a considerable hold in Chanderi. To a certain extent tradition also prevails over modernity in Chanderi in terms of the patron-client ties between the master-weavers and weavers with regard to saree production and trade. Mohallas *and* galis *continue to correspond with the ranking of the patrons and clients (master-weavers and weavers) or the upper and the lower castes/communities, including Muslims.*

Sociology has to include a sociology of the perception of the social world, that is, a sociology of the construction of the world-views which themselves contribute to the construction of this world.
Pierre Bourdieu 1990: 130

K.L. Sharma was formerly at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and is presently Vice-Chancellor, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan, 302 004, India.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 3 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

The concept of 'space' is key to the understanding of how people conceive their social world. We may define space as a natural, non-cultural and purely geographic aspect of human existence. But this would not be a sociological definition of space. Human society invariably tries to translate, transform and appropriate geographical spaces such as land, locations, mountains, rivers, etc., into cultural objects, possessions and assets. The transformation of geographical 'space' into 'social space' is not only an ongoing and dynamic process, but involves also scientific, technical and political dimensions. The making and remaking of space implies a process of status-formation and the appropriation of physical and cultural endowments. Ultimately, the delineation of social space affects individuals, families, groups, neighbourhoods, villages, cities and even nations in everyday life (Gupta 2000). Thus, there is an omnipresent and ubiquitous process of space-formation that is consequent upon social practices and that may have supralocal consequences. Each person knows his or her space in the social world but, on occasions, this may be at variance with how other people view it. 'Space-segregation' prevails both at the subjective as well as the objective levels. Space-segregation implies 'social distance' between people, including the semaphoring of social hierarchy. The recognition of distance, and also the negation of distance by way of political struggles, speak of both formal and substantive constructions of the social world. The question is: How does space-segregation take place? A quick answer, anticipating our discussion, would be that the advantaged, upwardly mobile and highly motivated members of a society appropriate a given geographical space by converting it into socio-cultural space, using their skills and networks. At any

Acknowledgements: This article is based on an Indo-French research programme involving scholars from the College de France and CNRS, Paris, and Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Professor G. Fussman of the College de France and his associates were actively engaged in the research work. On the Indian side, I was involved in the project right from its inception in 1989–90. A study of Chanderi, a small town in Guna district of Madhya Pradesh, was a unique experience because of its interdisciplinary and holistic approach to the study of urban dynamics. I have already published a monograph on Chanderi (1999) using the data-base of our joint endeavour. I am grateful to my French colleagues for extending me cooperation and help. My sincere thanks are to Professor G. Fussman who invited me to College de France in 1991–92, 1996 and 1997, and who undertook the responsibility for publishing *Chanderi, 1990–95* (Sharma 1999). I am also extremely grateful to my colleague, Professor Dipankar Gupta, for offering constructive criticisms and for his painstaking editorial improvements to the article. It goes without saying that responsibility for the data and analysis presented in this article is entirely mine.

given point of time a society can be seen as a socio-spatially divided structure stratified in terms of recogniseable social groups, families and individuals. Bourdieu writes: 'In fact, social distances are written into bodies or more exactly, into the relationship to the body, to language and to time' (Bourdieu 1990: 128). This implies that distinctions of caste and class are significantly marked out in social space. In the following pages we hope to exemplify this by examining a small town in Madhya Pradesh named Chanderi.

I
Space-status nexus

The town of Chanderi in Guna District of Madhya Pradesh is an early medieval town famous for its historical monuments and architecture, and for a traditional form of town planning. It is scenically located on a hill surrounded by the Vidyanchal range on three sides. Today it is well known as a manufacturing centre for fine cotton and silk cloth, particularly sarees, for urban middle and upper middle-class women. All of these factors are relevant for understanding the nexus between space and status in operational terms. Chanderi has clearly demarcated spatial segments commensurate with the graded social divisions among its inhabitants. The administrative formal divisions, namely wards, do not reflect social divisions as clearly as do the *mohallas* (neighbourhoods) and the *gali*s (lanes). These spatial divisions are not viewed by the people simply as territorial units in the town; they are accepted more as cultural sites and living marks of abodes and identities. Geographical demarcations thus amount to socio-cultural markers as well as insulations and inclusions, though in varying degrees.

It is interesting to note that those who have their houses located on the margins of *mohallas* and *gali*s also become 'marginal' socially and culturally. On the other hand, such people have the advantage of serving as social bridges linking both sides of the *mohallas* and *galis*. This is particularly true of the walled city and the old walled-in-like *mohallas* in the outer city. Retaining tradition in the walled city and in the medieval parts of the outer city is an important concern, as status and honour are associated with and derived from it. The allocation of space to different castes and communities in Chanderi is a well-recognised aspect of status-determination. This form of space-segregation, with its explicit unevenness, is taken for granted because it is transmitted from generation to generation.

The perception of space-segregation is formed largely because of underlying structural constraints, most notably, caste and class-based distinctions. The taken-for-granted social world is thus seen through 'mental structures' and these are in turn the product of an internalisation of structures of the social world (Bourdieu 1990: 13). Edmund Husserl called this process a 'doxic modality' (quoted from ibid.: 125) of apprehending the social world.

Simultaneously, Chanderi has also been absorbing modernity during the past 100 years. Modernity not only creates a new space-structure and thereby new patterns of status and honour; it also weakens traditional expressions of these themes. Since tradition and modernity are not absolute phenomena and the two could co-exist, one may think of a third paradigm of space and status in the form of a synthesis of tradition and modernity. Chanderi looks both old and new, as well as traditional and modern. If *mohallas* and *galis* represent tradition, new offices, shops, markets, institutions, residences, colleges, etc., symbolise modernity. As these exhibits of modernity have not wiped out traditional spatial and residential patterns, there is a co-existence of the two. This has contributed to a certain smoothness in Chanderi's social fabric.

In this regard I go along with Dipankar Gupta's analysis of space and culture. Gupta observes:

> Cultures are enacted in a space with all its dimensions. Cultures thus become palpable realities and ostensible facts. Cultures are not locked up in remote empyrean recesses but are enacted and need to be expressed in a variety of existential settings. This obviously presumes a space; no space, no cultural enactment. The longer the duration of a certain cultural space the greater is its identification with that culture. This also allows certain voices to consolidate themselves as regnant meanings of root metaphors. These voices have to do with the specifics of the cultural locale for the space. The specifics of the space and its diacritics are reflected in the various preferred innuendos and localities of the root metaphors. (Gupta 2000: 39)

For us, then, 'space' is both a physical entity as well as a cultural/social phenomenon. The people of Chanderi know the separation of one *mohalla* from another. Yet what is more significant for them is the name of the *mohalla* and the meaning and the message it gives to its members and to other inhabitants. This is how 'space' becomes a cultural construct and a determinant of status. People are well aware of the 'official classification'

of wards and their actual delineations. In social life, however, it is the classification of *galis* and *mohallas* that is a more effective marker of identity and social ties. The following pages will dilate upon Chanderi's space-status interactive nexus.

II
Situating Chanderi as a socio-cultural space

Chanderi is an appropriate town for the study of the space-status nexus because it is both an extraordinary and an ordinary town. Population-wise it is like any small town, but its rich cultural heritage, archaeological wealth, and traditional craftsmanship make Chanderi unique. It is an ordinary town in some respects because it has all the features of a modern urban centre—banks, colleges, schools, roads, means of transport and communication, government offices, a police station, etc. But the effects of its long history are also discernible. Chanderi was not only the headquarters of a *suba* (province) in the reign of Akbar (1556–1605 AD), but also a substantially large town and cultural centre located at a strategic point on the trade route between north and south India. The urbanity of Chanderi was a matter of great pride in medieval times. Therefore, modern Chanderi cannot be judged solely on the basis of its size, or in terms of its recent history: this would not bring out its specific cultural ethos. Again, in spite of the fact that more than 50 per cent of Chanderi's population is dependent on weaving, Chanderi cannot be considered solely as a market/manufacturing town; nor is it a suburban or overgrown artisan village (Sharma 1999).

Chanderi was always 'urban', and it was never a village in the garb of a town. Classifications like 'entrepot markets', 'regional entrepot', 'sub-urban artisan village' (Bayly 1980: 21–24), and Zamindari towns, European factory towns, or even transient mufassal towns, do not fit Chanderi. This is because Chanderi is not a town that lies between a village and a city. Chanderi is also not a residual entity, for village idioms and practices as well as a distinctive urbanity are to be found intermixed here in varying degrees.

What Akös Östör (1984) says about a Bengal town applies to Chanderi as well. Local legends, rituals, bazaars, and memories of rebellion act as effective conceptual tools for probing into the cultural spaces within Chanderi, as well as Chanderi as a social space *sui generis*. The notions of *itihas* (history), *bazaar* (market), *sarkar* (government), and *andolan*

(rebellion), as used by Östör, can provide a convincing description of the dialectics of Chanderi's social formation. The description of Chanderi in *Ain-i-Akbari*, the vivacity of Sadar Bazaar with its *sahukars* and traders, the Mutiny of 1857 and the heroism of Tantia Topi in Chanderi, and the erstwhile power of the rajas and feudal lords have all left their traces over the entire gamut of Chanderi society.

The cultural heritage of Chanderi, which is evident in its natural endowments, historical monuments and objects and in the manufacturing of fine muslin fabrics,[1] has generated a strong sense of belonging and attachment to the town. The symbolic strength that people derive from Chanderi's cultural panorama is quite remarkable. Literary production and the cultural orientation of the people of Chanderi are dependent to a great extent upon what exists in Chanderi as a historical reality. The members of Chanderi's literati are aware of Chanderi's history and make positive references to it. Booklets, articles, reports, documents, etc., on Chanderi are all known to a large cross-section of the people.[2] Chanderi has clearly an identity of its own and its people have a creative imagination rooted in memories, both mythic and historical, of the town.

Urbanisation, de-urbanisation and, lately, re-urbanisation characterise Chanderi's ups and downs. The *Ain-i-Akbari* gives us an idea of its past grandeur with mosques and caravanserais (Jarrett 1949: 207, 212–14). The decline of Chanderi's administrative status to that of a sub-*tehsil* after 1857 indicated its downfall, but recent developments during the past two decades give evidence of Chanderi's re-urbanisation. Chanderi's administrative status has been elevated to that of a *tehsil* and sub-divisional headquarters. This is in recognition of the fact that it has as many as forty offices, a post-graduate college, and a network of roads and bus routes within its confines. The expansion of markets, the

[1] The fine silk fabric imported from China, Korea and Japan, and now also produced in India, used for manufacturing of sarees, is delicate, expensive and quite transparent. Women from ordinary families with meagre incomes cannot afford this expensive wear, which is also not considered desirable because of its transparency. However, urban middle-class women appreciate the Chanderi saree as summer wear, particularly from March to September, because it is elegant, light, delicate, and a status-symbol as well. Manufacturing of silk sarees began in 1940, and prior to this, fine muslin cloth was manufactured, including sarees.

[2] Among booklets and guides to Chanderi are the following: M.B. Garde, *A guide to Chanderi*; R. Nath, *The art of Chanderi*; Government of Madhya Pradesh, *Chanderi* (1988, 1989), and Kundan Lal Bharatiya, *Chanderi: Alk parichay*. Besides these popular booklets, educated Chanderi citizens are aware that the town has been mentioned in historical books and documents, and classics such as *Ain-i-Akbari*.

establishment of telecommunication and trade links with major cities and towns, the emergence of a 'service gentry' and, finally, the commercialisation of saree manufacture and trade are recent developments. Interestingly, the manufacturing and selling of sarees are still carried out to a large degree in a traditional format. Production and trade continue to be family-based, though they are influenced by modern communication and technology. *Galis* and *mohallas* also retain traditional caste/community patterns, even as such forms of tradition are showing signs of accommodation with the present.

After Chanderi's rise to the status of a *tehsil*, and subsequently to the rank of sub-divisional headquarters, its population grew (during 1981–91) by as much as 64.63 per cent, whereas growth was only 21 per cent during the preceding decade. As the headquarters of a *tehsil* and sub-division, Chanderi has now become an important administrative town. It therefore has its complement of offices relating to Block Development, education, irrigation, forest, and so forth, which have given an impetus to Chanderi's population growth. An appreciable expansion in the handloom industry widened trade links and also encouraged outsiders (weavers) to visit Chanderi. Some of them even stayed on and settled down in Chanderi.

III
Chanderi's urbanity

Is Chanderi 'urban' despite its small size? In 1911 the population of Chanderi was just 2,753, nearly half of what was in 1891. Up to 1951, Chanderi remained a type VI town, the smallest administrative category. Most of its inhabitants were dependent upon non-agricultural occupations. As per the 1991 census, Chanderi's population rose to nearly 20,000, and it was about 25,000 by 2001. During the decade of 1981–91, Chanderi was not only granted a higher administrative status due to the phenomenal increase in its population, but it also had the privilege of being chosen for development under the auspices of the Special Area Development Authority (SADA).[3] The SADA had the following aims: (*i*) to

[3] The Government of Madhya Pradesh replaced the municipal committees of some towns, which were of historico-cultural significance, by a Special Area Development Authority (SADA). Chanderi was one such town. A development plan for a period of seventeen years (1985–2001) was prepared with a budget of about Rs 5 crores. The SADA undertook several development projects and also repaired and renovated

determine the use of land in future keeping in view situational, physical, natural and other related aspects; (*ii*) to renovate objects and places of archaeological significance, and to determine future plans of land-use for their protection and development; and (*iii*) to promote and expand the traditional handloom industry by providing building, technical know-how, quality improvement and provision for training facilities (Julka 1985).

Two obvious outcomes of this plan were, first, the rejuvenation of Chanderi's rich cultural heritage; and second, the re-urbanisation of the town by way of new programmes and activities. The cultural revival of Chanderi was visualised as a complementary aspect of its re-urbanisation.

Urban life, as a cultural phenomenon, is visible in Chanderi in a variety of ways. Chanderi has many bazaars and a fairly diversified occupational structure, as well as several educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and other civic amenities. Even the life-styles of Chanderi residents are infected with consumer-oriented aspirations. But this apparent urbanity has a village-like ethos and culture hidden within it. Social relations, intra-caste/community ties, spatial segregation, behavioural patterns and other forms of primary activities make Chanderi a rural-like settlement as well. On the other hand, Chanderi poses no difficulty as a town as far as its formal identification is concerned. From 1871 to 2001, Chanderi has been formally identified as a town, not so much because of its size as for its history, culture and architecture. However, urbanism as a way of life and idiom of social relations has not made major inroads in the interrelations between Chanderi's residents. The *gestalt* of family structure, and the adherence to certain socio-cultural values in interpersonal relations, remain traditional in many respects even today. For example, in Chanderi the traditional values have remained largely intact as people often meet and interact in the bazaar and in *nukkad*s (corners) of *mohalla*s and *gali*s, at pan shops and tea stalls. More than these common arenas of social interaction, community-specific festivals such as Teej, Gangore, Dussehera, Diwali, Holi, temples, *jagran*s, etc., for Hindus; and mosques, *namaz* (prayer), *madarsas*, *anjuman*s, etc., for Muslims, provide opportunities for social intercourse. Some common activities such as *mushaira*s and *kavi sammelans* involve a cross-section of people in Chanderi.

---

monuments such as Koshak Mahal, Badal Mahal, etc. SADA was supposed to be a non-political body. About two years ago the SADA was abolished and the municipality reinstated.

The social space of Chanderi is clearly observable to the citizens of Chanderi at two levels: (*i*) through popular literature; and (*ii*) through observation of the nexus between cultural ambience and social status. An examination of various popular writings, pamphlets, guides and historical texts reveals the importance Chanderi enjoys as a town (*nagar/nagari*) in these documents.[4] Since Chanderi was situated on the trade route between north and south India in the medieval period, its importance was considerable. The *Budhi* (old) Chanderi's ruins of Jain temples on the banks of the Urvashi river speak of its glorious past, and even today they are deemed to be architecturally very significant. The belief that Chanderi was a pre-Vedic town bearing the name Chandrapuram, which was later on known as Chedi in the Mahabharat period, or Chandragiri or Chandesh, creates another image of the town as one with a rich cultural heritage going back to very ancient times. The ruins of buildings, houses, forts, temples, mosques, etc., indicate the important cultural and political status that Chanderi enjoyed in the medieval period.

IV
History and cultural imagery

More than the authenticity of the perceptions and images about Chanderi, the perception of Chanderi itself as a magnificent town has become an acknowledged reality. Rivers, fountains, lakes, *baolis* (step-wells), forests, hills, monuments, temples, mosques, and *talabs* (ponds) provide existential evidence of the wonder that Chanderi was. Badal Mahal, Dilli Darwaza, Koshak Mahal, Zami Masjid, Khandargiri, Jageshwari temple and numerous other sites make Chanderi distinctly different from other neighbouring towns in the region, such as Guna, Ashok Nagar, Mungaoli and Lalitpur. The people of Chanderi are also aware of the many historical inscriptions found in Chanderi. The post-10th century period is historically better known, and its historical records are taken to be more authentic than descriptions of the earlier period. As noted, the power dynamics of the later period and the cultural wealth of the earlier period

[4] People in Chanderi indulge excessively in its glamorisation and glorification, calling it a *nagari* (beautiful city). Romanticisation, by way of counting the numbers of *baolis*, ponds, lakes, falls, hills, forts, palaces, temples, mosques, natural surroundings, etc., is not simply a metaphor. There are those who really believe in the magical charm of the town, dating from the pre-1857 period.

are known to most of the enlightened residents of Chanderi. Most of the upper castes and middle-class residents of Chanderi can knowledgeably refer to Alberuni, Ibn Battuta, Kirtidurga (fort), Ghiyas-ud-din Balban, Ala-ud-din Khilji, Ghori, Rana Sanga, Medini Rai, Ibraham Lodi, Babur, Rudra Pratab, Sher Shah Suri, Akbar, Bundelas, Scindia, etc.

An apt example of this image is based on an account reported in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. After the fall of Malwa, Akbar took over Chanderi in 1569, and made it the headquarters of a *sarkar* in the *subah* of Malwa (Jarrett 1949). The *Ain-i-Akbari* describes Chanderi in great detail as a large settlement, with 14,000 stone houses, 12,000 mosques, 384 markets, and 360 spacious caravanserais. Besides these, Chanderi had 61 *mahals*, 554,277 *bighas* and 17 *biswas* of land, and maintained a cavalry of 5,970, an infantry of 66,085, and 90 elephants. Fourteen-thousand houses were meant for a population of two lakhs. Whether such a description is accurate or not is not relevant. What is important is that people know of these descriptions and often glorify them. Even the intriguing and puzzling political biography of Chanderi is interpreted as an indicator of its strategic importance in the past. That it functioned once as the headquarters of a *sarkar* in Akbar's reign has added to its image and image-making.

The appreciation of Chanderi as a celebrated place for cultural wealth and the manufacture of muslin cloth has contributed to a romanticised image of the town. The establishment of the SADA in Chanderi in place of a Municipal Committee about two decades ago, and the elevation of Chanderi from a *tappa* (sub) *tehsil* to a full fledged *tehsil* and sub-divisional headquarters, have not only given it a new administrative status, but have also led to the process of re-urbanisation and employment generation. The manufacturing of fine muslin cloth had generally been conducive to the multicultural character of the town, as it involved different communities and categories of people such as Muslims, Kolis, Jains, government functionaries, and outsiders (traders from major towns of India). Even the decline of the town as a manufacturing centre and the takeover of Chanderi by the British in 1857 after the defeat of Tantia Topi, the multicultural character of the town remained by and large intact. The economic revival of this town came by way of the introduction of weavers' cooperatives, and government subsidies and loans to the weavers. Nearly 25 per cent of the saree trade slipped from local traders and master-weavers to the cooperatives. The use of the Badal Mahal

(a medieval palace, now a ruined monument) as an insignia on Chanderi sarees by the local administration signifies harmony between economy and culture.

Today, despite numerous government offices and civic amenities and the level of social relations, Chanderi still retains many village-like characteristics. These are easily visible in the manner in which castes and communities interact, and also in the way spatial segregation is linked to status hierarchy. This despite being a town for the past 1,000 years and more according to recorded history.

V
Caste/community and space organisation

A curious correspondence between caste/community structure and space organisation (that is, *mohallas* and *galis*) has upheld the diverse cultural character of Chanderi. The four main castes/communities of Chanderi, namely Brahmins, Kolis, Jains and Muslims, also constitute its three major religious communities, that is, Hindus, Jains and Musalmans. Together they form approximately 75 per cent of the population of Chanderi. If we add to this castes like Chamars, Kachhis, Nais and Kumhars, then these eight groups would make 90 per cent of the population of Chanderi. Though the Brahmins are at the top of the ritual hierarchy and ahead of other groups with regard to education and white-collar jobs, Muslims and Jains, who together form 50 per cent of Chanderi's population, control saree manufacturing, trade and commerce, and in effect, the town's economy. The dominating numerical and economic presence of Muslims and Jains discourages the rigid observance of caste in everyday life. Some other castes such as Chamar, Dhimar, Kachhi, Nai, Kumhar, etc., are reasonably numerous, but their presence in the affairs of Chanderi is minimal. On the other hand, though Rajputs are numerically a small caste, their overall status and dominance is even higher than that of Muslims, Jains and Brahmins. Some Rajputs are addressed even today as *Raja* or *Raja Bhaiya*.[5]

[5] The title of 'Raja' among the dominant Rajput families is quite common. 'Raja Bhaiya' is often used to address politically influential young Rajput leaders. At times it is used for the local bullies as well, because people are scared of them. Generally, such a title indicates that the persons concerned belong to the traditional ruling caste of Kshatriya/Rajput. It is projected as a status symbol.

We have collected information about thirty-five castes and communities (see Table 1).[6] All Muslim groups, including Pathans, Sheikhs, Momins,

Table 1
Chanderi Castes in 1992

Name of the Caste	*Number of Households*
Muslim	800
Jain284	
Brahmin	245
Koli (SC-Scheduled Caste)	301
Chamar (SC)	129
Dhimar (SC-fishermen)	98
Kachhi (vetegable growers)	59
Sihare (traders, formely alcohol-sellers)	54
Nai (barbers)	47
Rawat (ST-Scheduled Tribe)	34
Soni (jewellers)	33
Basore (SC-basket-makers, band-masters)	31
Kumhar (pot-makers)	29
Khatik (SC-butchers)	29
Rajput	30
Mali (flower-growers)	19
Sahu or Teli (oil-makers)	19
Kayastha	18
Maheshwari (traders, Banias)	5
Mogia (ST-ex-criminal tribe)	10
Khangar, Mirdha (SC-watchmen)	9
Dakot (low-caste priests)	8
Punjabi	6
Jogi (OBC-beggars)	5
Katia (SC-former cotton-spinners)	5
Gadaria (herdsmen)	5
Shejwari (cot-makers)	4
Mehtar (SC-sweepers)	30
Ahir (herdsmen)	3
Darzi (tailors)	20
Lakhera (bangle-makers)	3
Kadera (cracker-makers)	3
Badai (carpenters)	4
Sikh	1
Barar (SC-like Basor)	1
Total Number of Households	2,381

Source: Sharma 1999: 58.

[6] Caste- and community-based spatial and social segregation is reflected in Chanderi by way of demarcated *mohallas* and *galis* and stratified social interactions. Clearly,

Kunjaras and Dhobis have been shown as one category.[7] They constitute about one-third of the population of Chanderi.

As Table 1 shows, there is a great degree of social and cultural diversity in Chanderi. This also has an impact on the allocation and distribution of space in terms of economic and cultural status. Muslims, Jains, Kolis and Brahmins still largely pursue their traditional occupations, viz. weaving, commerce, weaving, and teaching, respectively. Other castes also generally continue with their traditional occupations because, being numerically small, they find them viable even in the present situation. It needs to be mentioned that the *jajmani* system has never been a strong mechanism for regulating intercaste relations in Chanderi. However, a considerable nexus between caste and occupation is evident in the case of about twenty-one castes which continue to pursue their respective traditional occupations, as they did in 1921 in the Gwalior State (see Table 2). Though market forces may have changed the bases and modus operandi of occupational transactions, caste and occupation still largely coincide.

Space as a socio-cultural phenomenon is evident in Chanderi's eighty-six *mohallas* inhabited by thirty-five castes and communities. Some of the *mohallas* are exclusively inhabited by a single caste or community. But when *mohallas* have more than one caste or community of more or

---

three categories, namely, lower, middle and upper, are prevalent among the Muslims of Chanderi. For example, Faqirs, Dhobis, Ghosis and Kunjaras are lower than Momins (Ansaris), and the latter are lower than Pathans and Sayyids. Brahmins, Rajputs, Jains and Maheshwaris are the main upper castes. Each one of them is internally differentiated. Jains have three sub-groups, whereas Brahmins have eleven sub-castes. Similarly three sub-groups, namely, Chauhan, Bundela and Parmar, are found among the Rajputs of Chanderi. Kayasthas, Kolis, etc , also have sub-castes. The middle castes in Chanderi are Soni, Darzi, Ahir, Mali, Khati, Sihare, Kumhar, etc. Castes such as Kachhi, Nai, Sahu, Dakot, Jogi, Gadaria, Shejwari, Lakhera, and Kadera are lower castes. Some castes, which were formerly 'untouchable', are at the bottom of the social pyramid. These are Koli, Chamar, Dhimar, Basore, Khatik, Khangar, Katia, Barar and Mehtar.

Comparing the Hindu and Muslim groups, it may be stated that Pathans are perceived as equal to the upper castes, while Ansaris and Kolis are seen as equal in terms of social hierarchy and common occupational status. Kunjaras and Dhobis are equated with lower castes like Lakhera, Kadera, Shejwari, etc. These social perceptions are transmitted from generation to generation. *Jati* is used as a generic word for caste, sub-caste, gotra and community and for divisions within given communities. Ansaris are referred as a *jati*, as are the Pathans, Kunjaras, Fakirs, etc.

[7] There are about 300 households of Sheikhs, Pathans, Mirzas and Moghols, and about 500 households of Momins/Ansaris and other Muslim groups.

Table 2
Hindu Castes and their Traditional Occupations in the Gwalior State (1921) and in Chanderi (1992)

Name of Caste	*Traditional Occupation*
Ahir	grazing and dairy
Bania (including Jain)	trade and commerce
Brahmin	priesthood
Chamar	leather-work
Darzi	tailoring
Dhimar	fishing, palanquin-bearing
Gadaria	grazing and dairy
Kachhi	cultivation
Kayastha	office-work (white-collar)
Khangar	watchmanship
Khati	carpentry
Khatik	butchery
Koli	weaving
Kumhar	pot-making
Mali	cultivation, gardening
Mehtar	scavenging, sweeping
Mirdha	watchmanship
Nai	hair and nail cutting
Rajput	landholding
Sonar	goldsmithy
Teli	oil-pressing

Sources: Census of India, 1921, *Gwalior, Report & Tables* (Gwalior Aliah Darbar Press), Sharma 1999: 59.

less the same social status, they are generally engaged in similar economic activities. In some single caste/community *mohallas* people are engaged in different economic pursuits because of intra-caste social differentiation. Traditional activities such as pot-making, hair-cutting, priesthood, trade and commerce, manufacturing of clothes, etc., are pursued on a commercial basis by Kumhars, Nais, Brahmins, Banias, Kolis and Ansaris, respectively. However, there are a few *mohallas* with a plurality of caste groups and a corresponding diversity of occupations. Undoubtedly, in general, a close empirical connection can be seen between *mohalla* (space) and caste/community affiliation in Chanderi. This correspondence has effectively kept caste and community traditions intact. The location of temples, mosques and monuments in different localities also speaks of the spatio-socio-cultural character of the town.

Chanderi can be viewed as a social universe constituted by castes and communities defined by their relative status. The basic principles of

differentiation and stratification demarcate boundaries within the universe. Despite socio-cultural homogeneity among the members of a caste/community in a designated social space (*mohalla/gali*), differences in economic and power relations are still discernible. Thus, the position of a given family in the social space (*mohalla*) is dependent also upon the position it occupies in different domains. So strong is the feeling of spatial attachment that people do not shift to other *mohallas* even if they have the opportunity of living in better conditions. The *mohalla* provides a sense of social security and social recognition.

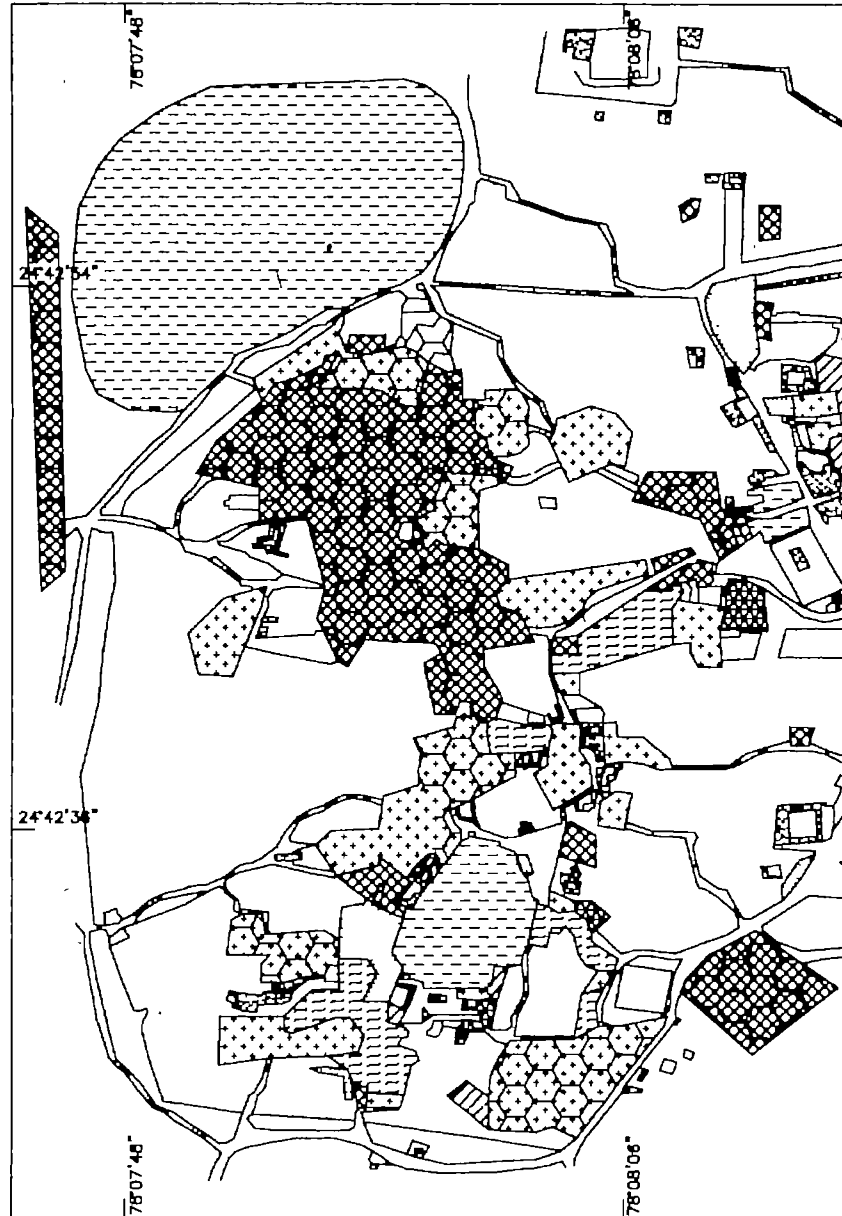
Twenty-eight of the single caste/group *mohallas* are inhabited solely by Muslim groups. Another twenty are exclusively single caste *mohallas*: in three of them Kolis, in five Jains, and in three others only Brahmins reside, while the remaining nine are inhabited by other castes, singly.

Several of these *mohallas* are named after specific castes and communities. For example, only Chamars inhabit the Chamaryana *mohalla*. *Mohallas* such as Khatikyana, Basoryana, Dhimaryana, Dhubiyana, Lalaji Ki Gali and Ghusyana, are eponymously named after castes such as Khatik, Basore, Dhimar, Dhobi, Kayastha and Ghosi. Besides these exclusively caste/community-based *mohallas*, in some *mohallas* castes of nearly equal status reside. The Jogiyana *mohalla* is inhabited by Kolis, Chamars and Kasais, with the exception of one Pathan family. Upper-caste Hindus live in the Lakshmanji Ka Mandir *mohalla*. Ansaris and Bhangis live in Babaki Baoli, and in the Garmai Baoli *mohalla*. Ansaris and Ghosis reside together. However, there are some exceptions too. One or two upper-caste families live in *mohallas* with a preponderance of lower castes and Ansaris. The reverse is also true. Finally, in *mohallas* such as Pancham Nagar Colony, Rajghat Road, Piran Chowk, Har Kund, Bala Khani and Kunjaryana, two or more castes/communities live together.

Map 1 clearly indicates that segregation is the hallmark of the social universe of Chanderi. Sayyids, Pathans and Mughals (upper stratum) and Momins (Ansari weavers) and other Muslims such as Kunjaras and Dhobis live in segregated enclaves. Brahmins, Thakurs and Maheshwaris live in exclusive *mohallas*, as do Jains and Kolis (weavers). Thus, the data of Table 3 and Map 1 substantiate the view that the people of Chanderi, across a wide range of life-styles, from trade and commerce to weaving and worshipping, have a very strong and deep-rooted socio-spatial consciousness. Such a sense of belonging to a *mohalla* has geographical, social and psychological dimensions.

Map 1

Simplified Map of the Castes Drawn over an Intach Plan



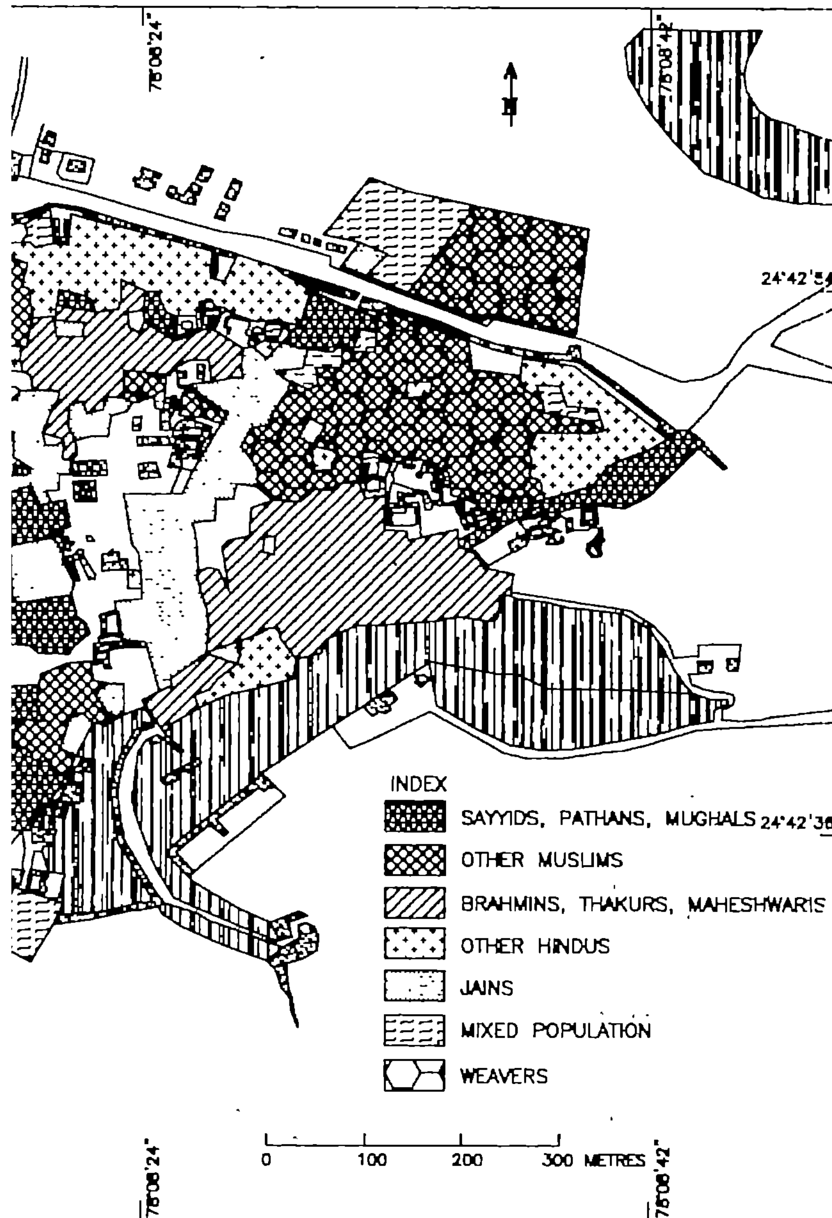

78°08'24"
78°08'42"
N
24°42'54"
24°42'36"
INDEX
SAYYIDS, PATHANS, MUGHALS
OTHER MUSLIMS
BRAHMINS, THAKURS, MAHESHWARIS
OTHER HINDUS
JAINS
MIXED POPULATION
WEAVERS
0
100
200
300 METRES
78°08'24"
78°08'42"

Table 3
Caste and mohallas

	Number
Exclusive *mohallas*	
Muslims	28
Kolis	3
Jains	5
Brahmins	3
Others castes	9
Mixed *mohallas* (Muslims and other castes)	
Ansari Muslims and Kolis	4
Muslims (Pathans and upper castes)	4
Ansaris and other castes	5
Lower Muslims and other castes	1
Mixed *mohallas* (without Muslims)	
Only upper castes	1
Upper and middle castes	1
Upper and lower castes	5
Only lower castes	5
Upper middle and lower castes	5
Offices, bazaars, etc.	7
Total number of *mohallas*	86

Source: Sharma 1999: 40–42. (Though 96 *mohallas* and *galis* have been counted, we have authenticated the social composition of only 86 of these.)

Jain and Maheshwari traders carry out their trade and commerce from their residential premises because it is both convenient and compatible with their life-styles. They could very well shift their residences from the congested Sadar Bazaar and its *galis* to open areas on the outskirts of the town, but they prefer to keep family, community and economic activities together. However, when the people of Chanderi are certain that a new space will provide them higher status ranking, they may even compete to enter such locations. Some people have moved to the roadside market from the walled-in *mohallas*; others have started *dhabas* and hotels on the main road. But such shifts are still not frequent.

Chanderi is urban because of its recognition as a town in the census reports, and in terms of the existing civic amenities, bazaars, transport and communication networks, and educational institutions. Besides such infrastructural amenities, the historical and cultural significance of Chanderi has added to its urbanity. Chanderi has clear cultural boundaries drawn through *mohallas* and *galis*, a characteristic feature of small towns. Though *mohalla* identity is quite strong in a general way, what is more

crucial is the specific space one enjoys within one's *mohalla*, in terms of caste, community and occupational group. Chanderi's cultural panorama is deeply imbued with traditional values and caste/community identities. All castes and communities observe their own specific celebrations and functions. For Brahmins, temples are a nodal institution. An old Jain temple and the Khandargiri caves are sites of religious activities for the Jains of Chanderi. For Muslims, the Zami Masjid is a sacred place for the Friday prayers. All castes participate in festivals like Gangore, Teej, Dussehera, Holi and Diwali, while *bhajans*, *kathas*, *kirtans*, *satsangs* and *havans* are normal activities in most Hindu families. Then there are activities such as *kavi sammelans*, *mushayaras*, *nataks*, *melas*, circus, etc., that are enjoyed by everyone irrespective of caste or creed.

VI
Economy, urbanism and culture

Though Chanderi is 'urban', it is not 'modern'. Its current dynamics can be characterised by the term *proto-industrialisation* (Kriedte et al. 1981). The concept of proto-industrialisation aptly characterises the nexus between family, industry, technology and marketing in the manufacturing of silk sarees and muslin cloth. Weaving is what determines the regional and supra-regional importance of Chanderi. Feudalism extended a helping hand to Chanderi industry whenever it was facing a crisis of survival. Thus, Chanderi's proto-industrialisation can be perceived as 'industrialisation before industrialisation' (ibid.: 6). But Chanderi has so far not witnessed 'industrialisation' after proto-industrialisation, as there is no change in the technology and processes of saree production. After the eclipse of feudalism, the State came to the rescue of the industry in Chanderi, to some extent emancipating the weavers from the master weavers and traders through weavers' cooperatives, loans and subsidies.

Weaving in Chanderi signifies 'family economy', the central feature of which is not to maximise profit and achieve a monetary surplus, but to maximise gross produce at the family level (Kriedte, et al. 1981: 40–41). This attitude rests on the structure of familial relations of production and consumption. Family's subsistence remains the main concern and the family continues to work until its subsistence is assured (ibid.: 66). Additional needs and contingencies such as illness, birth, marriage, etc., are met by putting in more labour or by taking advance money from the master-weaver. In Chanderi one could see a close connection between

production of cloth and socio-cultural reproduction. The observation made by Medick (ibid.: 66–67) aptly applies to the weavers of Chanderi. Weavers sang at their looms. A trip to the market combined business with social pleasures; exchanging news and courtesies with a craftsman or dealer introduced sociability into an economic or service transaction. Thus, the very nature of the textile industry in Chanderi substantiates our thesis of the space-status nexus. The amalgamation of non-capitalist features with the commercial and entrepreneurial modes of production characterises the economy and class structure of Chanderi. It is a situation of capital without capitalism, of industry without industrialisation, of workers without their organisations or trade unions (Sharma 1999).

Generally, a weaver in Chanderi has three identities: (*i*) as a weaver; (*ii*) as a Muslim or Koli; and (*iii*) as a resident of a given *mohalla*. This pattern of identity is found among most of the social groups in Chanderi. All three identities, though internally further differentiated, make up a composite identity of a person/family/group as the case may be. While the semiotic or cultural approach of Nita Kumar (1988) assumes that the weavers have their own world, have control over their body, time and space, and have freedom in selection of the design and colour of their products as well as in the choice of instruments of weaving, Deepak Mehta (1992), on the contrary, observes that in the weaving of a highly ritualised cloth like a shroud, which is specific and outside the market economy, the weaver does not have freedom of selection. Our study of Chanderi weaving as a mundane activity shows that weavers are entirely dependent upon the master-weavers, including in the selection of design and colour; as such, weaving is a controlled activity. The existential condition of weavers determines their degree of autonomy and freedom, though state intervention has given them some relief from the bondage inflicted by the master-weavers. Certainly, the image of excellence in saree manufacturing has ensured continuity and perfection in this particular pursuit.

The major traditional occupation in Chanderi is weaving. This makes Chanderi a 'service *qasba*' for outsiders, but it also brings in a degree of commercialism which positions it in a nexus with the outside world, including big metropoles such as Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. The revival of this traditional lifeline and of the process of re-urbanisation was initiated by the SADA. This significant step has stopped the de-urbanisation process which had started immediately after 1857. Re-urbanisation has created new cultural spaces in terms of the incorporation of offices, authorities, specialists and services. The new infrastructure

has made a big difference to Chanderi, reviving the town after a lull of nearly 150 years.

Like many other small towns, Chanderi too has witnessed 'dependent urbanisation'. Dependence on state support and on the wider economic order has largely determined the re-urbanisation of Chanderi. Small towns also suffer in competition with bigger towns and cities, because the latter corner the lion's share of the available infrastructure and resources. If Chanderi has survived as a town, it is more because of the twinning of its specific and unique cultural situation with SADA-inspired urban renewal programmes.

Though the *mohallas* of Chanderi are caste and community segregated, the municipal wards have a different character. Out of a total of twelve municipal wards, eight are named after modern leaders such as Gandhi, Nehru, Azad and Subhash Chandra Bose. The remaining wards are named after some significant religious symbols such as Jageshwari, Krishna, Hanuman and Bahubal. One can read in the naming of different wards a conscious effort to synthesise tradition and modernity. 'Space' is thus denoted by both tradition and modernity, separately as well as by way of a synthesis. Shops and residences are found together, the former on the ground floor and the latter on the first floor. Such an arrangement is not only convenient, but also eliminates contradiction between people's social and economic life.

A population of about 20,000 people (1991 Census) engages in as many as ninety-five different occupations and economic pursuits. This indicates the diversified nature of the urban occupational structure and the 'mix' of traditional and modern occupations. Hair-cutting, shop-keeping, teaching, etc., are performed as non-traditional activities in a 'market situation'. Some new occupations have been almost monopolised by some castes and communities, for example, upper castes control modern trade and commerce, teaching and government jobs.

The social aspect of space is evident even in the commercial zones of the town. New markets do not have even one saree shop, while the old market does not have a single automobile repair shop. Weavers are mostly attached to master-weavers, but some of them are also independent weavers and small entrepreneurs. However, there is an inherent antagonism between the master-weavers and the weavers, though it rarely surfaces in the form of severing economic ties or in agitation for increased wages. Several weavers have emancipated themselves from the control of master-weavers by sheer hard work and superior skills. In the late 1970s and

early 1980s, state intervention based on the Lahiri Committee's recommendations (1979) provided considerable relief to the weavers by way of subsidies and loans. About 25 per cent of the saree trade slipped from the master-weavers to the cooperatives, and to the new entrepreneurs who had sprung up from among the weavers themselves.

VII
Concluding remarks

A paradigm shift in our conceptualisation becomes necessary when people become conscious of their social space and status more than their material and existential conditions. Material objects and events alone do not create the social world in which people live. The natural and material worlds are transformed into the social world by way of social space and status. Our emphasis is on the recognition of the space-status nexus in a small town named Chanderi. Here is a town in which space is constructed on the basis of differentiation and ordered ranks of people in the form of *mohallas* and *galis*. Though Chanderi is a multifaceted town with diverse fields of activities, the space dimension appears in different domains of its social fabric.

In Chanderi, geographical space clearly indicates the space of social relations. Thus, geographic distances are social spaces. In the given situation of Chanderi's *mohallas* and *galis*, new social spaces or divisions may not easily come into being. Hence, a sort of stability characterises Chanderi. So entrenched is this space-status demarcation that even people's disquiet and anxiety do not stir the established cultural notions and their practices. The making and remaking of social space indicates a need for the reconceptualisation of social relations and space allocation.

Chanderi demonstrates a double contingency, a double game, in real life situations by way of a synthesis of tradition and modernity. Without dismantling boundary maintenance, it has accepted new classifications and social divisions. A new system of social recognitions and spaces, without severely attacking the existing hierarchies, characterises Chanderi's multiculturalism, that is, new meaning-strata and stratifications. Pride in the past and hope in the future speak of the co-existence of the old and new, and traditional and modern in Chanderi. Proto-industrialisation continues in Chanderi despite the fact that the handloom industry has existed for 500 years. Caste/community remains at the centre-stage in its affairs, though the presence of the state apparatus has always

been abundantly visible. Various castes/communities continue to pursue their respective traditional occupations in a *market situation*. Even today, more than half of the eighty-six *mohallas* and *galis* are single-caste residential enclaves.

Chanderi characterises a unique conjunction of the ideal and actual social worlds in the enactment of socio-cultural activities. Caste/community no doubt remains a recogniseable entity in festivals and social gatherings, the ideology and moorings of the people in general reflect space-segregation, and social distance never remains hidden. At times competition for access to cherished social space is also observed. It indicates that no status is indisputable forever. Chanderi has not yet witnessed any effective struggle for creating new classifications of social classes, divisions and institutions. The deprived still hesitate to impose their worldviews on their superiors. Hence, geographic space remains commensurate with social space to a recogniseable extent.

REFERENCES

BAYLY, C.A. 1980. The small town and Islamic gentry in North India: The case of Kara. *In* Kenneth Ballhatchet and John Harrison, eds, *The city of South Asia, pre-modern and modern*, pp. 21–24. London: Curzon Press.

BOURDIEU, PIERRE. 1990. *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

GUPTA, DIPANKAR. 2000. *Culture, space and the nation-state*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

JARRETT, H.S. 1949. *Ain-i-Akbari of Abul Fazl-i-Allami* (transl. and ed., H.S. Jarrett, annotated by Jadu Nath Sarkar). Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal.

JULKA, VIMAL. 1985. *Chanderi Vikas Yojna, 1985–2001* (Plan for the Development of Chanderi 1985–2001). Chanderi: Special Area Development Authority.

KRIEDTE, PETER, HANS MEDICK and JURGEN SCHLUMBOHM. 1981. *Industrialization before industrialization: Rural industry in the genesis of capitalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

KUMAR, NITA. 1988. *The artisans of Banaras: Popular culture and identity, 1880–1986*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

LAHIRI, P.K. 1979. *Chanderi main hathkargha udyoga adhyan dal ka prativedan* (Report of the Study Team of Handloom Industry in Chanderi). Government of Madhya Pradesh: Department of Commerce and Industry.

MEHTA, DEEPAK. 1992. The semiotics of weaving: A case study. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 26, 1: 77–113.

ÖSTÖR, AKÖS. 1984. *Culture and power: Legend, ritual, bazaar and religion in Bengali society*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

SHARMA, K.L. 1999. *Chanderi, 1990–1995*. Paris: Edition Diffusion de Boccard.

A Biannual Journal from SAGE India

Conservation and Society

This Journal is dedicated to the theory and practice of the conservation of natural resources, particularly as mediated by the conflicts and tensions that accompany societal claims on these resources. A unique feature of the journal is its interdisciplinary focus since the scientific dimensions of conservation are inextricably linked to the politics and economics of effective conservation. It will draw upon both the natural and social sciences, particularly the disciplines of anthropology, history, sociology and biology.

Inaugural issue highlights:

Editorial: Why do we need a new journal on conservation? KAMAL BAWA
Special section on wildlife:
Cattle and conservation at Bharatpur: A case study in science and advocacy MICHAEL LEWIS
Debate:
Conservation as if biological diversity matters: M.D. Madhusudan, T.R. Shankar Raman, Nancy Lee Peluso, K. Ullas Karanth and Alan Rodgers
Review:
Parks, Politics and History: Conservation Dilemmas in Africa: Mahesh Rangarajan
Essay:
Globalisation: Effects on biodiversity, environment and society: David Ehrenfeld
Contributed Articles:
Marsha Pomeroy, Richard Primack, S.N. Rai and Ashwini Chhatre
Book and Video Reviews

Editor:
KAMALJIT S. BAWA
University of Massachusetts, Boston, USA, and
Ashoka Trust for Ecology and Environment, Bangalore, India

Frequency:
March, September

For subscription information contact the office near you:

Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd,
B-42, Panchsheel Enclave,
New Delhi-110017, India
or email at
journalsubs@indiasage.com

Sage Publications Ltd,
6, Bonhill Street, London,
EC2A 4PU, UK or email at
subscription@sagepub.co.uk

Sage Publications Inc.,
2455, Teller Road,
Thousand Oaks,
CA 91320, USA, or
email at order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications
New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

The social and ecological effects of industrialisation in a tribal region: The case of the Rourkela Steel Plant

Rajkishor Meher

Learning from the Western experience of economic development, the developing countries of the world, after their liberation from colonial rule in the 1940s and 1950s, pinned their hopes on industry and urbanisation to stimulate accelerated economic growth and the social transformation of backward regions. However, in many cases industrialisation of backward regions has generated unintended social and ecological consequences resulting in the involuntary displacement of human populations, the loss of traditional sustainable livelihoods, the marginalisation of the locals, especially the tribals, and the increasing environmental pollution of the region. As the process of development is usually designed at the top, it mostly serves the social and economic interests of the elite and privileged sections of society at the cost of the poor and downtrodden. The present article analyses the processes of industrialisation and economic development as causal factors in ecological degradation in Rourkela, the site of the India's first public sector steel plant and a region which, in the past, was predominantly inhabited by indigenous peoples.

Rajkishor Meher is at the Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, 751 013, India.

Acknowledgements: This article is based on my Ph.D. thesis, 'Industrialisation and the urban social structure: A sociological study of interrelationships between industry, ecology and society in Rourkela', submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in 1994, and on a recent survey of the peripheral villages of the Rourkela Steel Plant for a separate study, during September–October 1997. I am thankful to M.N. Panini, my Ph.D. supervisor, N.R. Sheth, Amitabh Kundu, and the editors and anonymous referees of *Contributions to Indian sociology* for their constructive comments and suggestions on an early version of this article, though they are in no way responsible for any deficiencies or lacunae.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 3 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

I
Introduction

Industrialisation has historically been the royal road to economic development and has been associated with urbanisation both as a cause and as a consequence. Learning from the experience of economic development in the West, the developing countries pinned their hopes on industrialisation and urbanisation to stimulate social and economic development. In labour surplus developing countries, Arthur Lewis's two sector model consisting of (*i*) a traditional rural subsistence sector characterised by zero or very low productivity of surplus labour, and (*ii*) a high productivity modern urban industrial sector into which labour from the subsistence sector is gradually transferred, has been influential in evolving strategies of development (Lewis 1954). One of the proponents of such a development strategy has lauded the role of the cities as growth poles in the regional economy; they act as the primary forces impelling rapid and high economic growth and as diffusion points of social change for developing countries (Breese 1969).

However, there is evidence to suggest that in India, the urban hierarchy reflects an extremely inefficient organisation of space, which tends quite often to cling to the regional economy as a parasite. The large urban agglomerations have expanded beyond the limits imposed by their economic base (Kundu 1980). Though the pace of industrialisation has increased after independence, mainly due to the strategy of planned economic development, the labour force of the cities is not being sufficiently absorbed in the organised sector of the urban economy. The urban centres do not have the capacity to assimilate the migrants, who are forced to rotate from one type of informal sector activity to another in order to eke out their living. Many large and medium sized cities in the backward regions are sliding from economic stagnation to positive retrogression. Slums continue to grow with the massive influx of poor people from the countryside, thereby exerting tremendous pressure on existing basic civic services supplied by the urban local bodies and causing urban environmental degradation. The location and concentration of various industries in urban areas, coupled with the growth in size and density of urban settlements, have resulted not only in the ruthless exploitation of the natural resources of the region and the uprooting of people who derive their livelihood from subsistence agriculture and other traditional occupations, but also the destruction of the eco-system due to increasing environmental

pollution. This further compounds the problem of poverty and affects the quality of life in the city.

Two schools of thought dominate the current debate on the ecological crisis arising from large-scale industrialisation and urbanisation. The Marxist school seeks to explain the current ecological crisis as arising from the capitalist system of production and the market-governed utilisation of natural resources and distribution of finished goods and services. The expanding consumerist culture results in the reckless exploitation of both renewable and nonrenewable resources, regardless of long-run ecological effects (see, e.g., Enzenberger 1974; Fyodorov and Novik 1977; Gorizontov 1985; Kolbasov 1983; Salgo 1973; Ursul 1983). In contrast, the liberal, non-Marxist school, which propagates the culture of the free market economy, holds the view that the current ecological crisis is the outcome of the intensive use of wrong technologies, and the increasing population growth which puts pressure on finite resources. According to this school, the emerging eco-crisis is mainly due to the use of obsolete technology, which is incapable of controlling the level of environmental pollution and ensuring the economic utilisation of the scarce resources (see, e.g., Caldwell 1970; Commoner 1971; Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1972; Ridgeway 1971). The proponents of this view believe that the current eco-crisis could be averted by devising appropriate and alternative technologies to prevent pollution by controlling the rate of effluents and non-degradable bio-chemical wastes discharged into the biosphere.

However, there is a need to recognise that the present ecological crisis is not merely the product of economic and population factors. The crisis is equally rooted in sociological factors—for instance, a value system that promotes socio-structural differentiation, free market economy, over-aggressive individualism and uncritical economic expansion at the cost of the depletion of scarce resources, pollution of the biosphere and ecological imbalances. Hence, an adequate understanding of the ecological crisis demands a different approach altogether that addresses the interplay of social, cultural, political and economic factors with the natural environment.

The modern city, with its reliance on energy- and resource-intensive technology, affects the wider ecological system within which it is located. Its mode of use of resources and their distribution across different segments of the urban and peripheral population are determined by a range of social, cultural, political and economic factors. In this article, I attempt to explore the sociological and ecological effects of India's first public sector steel plant on the Rourkela region, once home to many primitive

tribes such as Oraons, Mundas, Kharias, Kisans, etc. (Senapati 1975). The study starts with the premise that the growth of industries, and a modern urban economy and the concentration of a large human population in a limited space put severe pressure on the ecology and carrying capacity of the region. Further, when this type of urban-industrial development is accomplished at the cost of the underdevelopment of the periphery and rural hinterland, the dichotomy leads to the swelling of the urban centre through the large-scale migration of poor and low-skilled people from the countryside, thereby leading to the growth of the informal sector economy, squatter settlements and the breakdown of existing basic civic services and amenities. Thus, so long as adequate steps are not taken to prevent the massive environmental pollution exceeding the waste-absorbing and resource-regenerating capacity of the region, the very ecology or ecosystem which provides for the growth of a modern industrial economy and society ultimately becomes sick and collapses. The article concentrates on the backward and forward linkages that connect the city with the region of which it is a part. Needless to say, industry, ecology or the eco-system and human society are closely interrelated with one another. Human settlement patterns and economic and social systems usually evolve in accordance with the natural surroundings and resource endowments of the region, and also by the interplay of political factors.

II
The 'steel city' of Rourkela

Rourkela is the site of India's first public sector plant, located in the industrially backward state of Orissa. It is a fairly large industrial town with a population at present of around 500,000. Soon after liberation from British colonial rule, the Government of India took recourse to planned development to accelerate economic growth, promote balanced development, and remove socio-economic inequalities between regions and peoples. Thus, in the early 1950s, the country's first public sector steel plant came up in the mineral rich, backward region of Sundargarh district of Orissa, a region which forms a part of the Chota Nagpur plateau and is predominantly inhabited by the aboriginal population.

Before the setting up of the public sector steel plant, the present industrial city of Rourkela was an obscure village. In December 1953, the Government of India signed a collaborative agreement with M/s Fried

Krupp Essen and M/s Demag AG, Duisberg, of the then West Germany to set up the first public sector steel plant in the country. The Government then floated a new Company called Hindustan Steel Limited (HSL), and a technical survey of the sites for the location of the steel plant was made in 1953–54. The experts found that the area around Rourkela village in Sundargarh district of Orissa could be one of the best sites for the location of a steel plant not only from the techno-economic point of view, but also from the angle of reducing socio-economic disparities between regions and the people of India. In January 1955 the HSL submitted its blueprint to the Government indicating the layout of the Rourkela township, the steel plant and other industries. The blueprint covered an area of 207.37 sq. kms including 10,500 acres or 42.51 sq. kms for the steel township. Altogether, 30 villages inhabited by around 2,500 households were affected by the acquisition of private land (Roy Burman 1968).

Soon afterwards, the landscape of the region began to change with the development of infrastructure such as asphalt roads, rapid transportation and communication networks, electricity, piped potable water, drainage and sewerage, and the provision of other amenities required for the growth of a modern urban-industrial complex. Construction activities for the erection of the plant and its township drew a large number of workers to the region from different parts of the country through the contractors, jobbers and middlemen. Also, with the commissioning of the steel plant in 1960, the massive recruitment of different categories and grades of workers resulted in the further flow of workers to Rourkela from different parts of India. Thus, by the time of the 1961 Census the acquired tribal villages had already lost their original identity. The newly-grown urban complex, comprising the planned steel township housing the plant workers and the haphazardly grown civil town providing shelter to a heterogeneous population of private capitalists and entrepreneurs, small and big merchants, traders (wholesalers and retailers), transporters, informal sector workers, organised service sector workers, etc., came to be known as Rourkela; it gained the status of a big Class II category town[1] in the 1961 Census.

However, it is now evident that the growth of industries in the region followed by increasing urbanisation has adversely affected the ecosystem. There has been reckless exploitation of natural resources such

[1] For Census purposes, towns are classified into six categories: Class I—100,000 or more population; Class II—between 50,000–1,00,000, Class III—between 20,000–50,000; Class IV—between 10,000–20,000; Class V—5,000–10,000; and Class VI—a special category town with less than 5,000 population, such as a military cantonment area, etc.

as land, minerals, water, forests, and the like. The tribal people and other vulnerable sections of the population have been displaced from their traditional ecological bases and their self-sustaining subsistence system of production. Extensive mining activities for the exploration of iron ore, limestone, dolomite, manganese, etc., have destroyed the dense forests and fertile agricultural lands of the entire Panposh and Bonaigarh sub-divisions of Sundargarh district. The tribals, once dependent upon sustainable forest and primitive agricultural economy and unaccustomed to the culture of wage work (Cobden Ramsay 1930), now hire themselves out as daily wageworkers. When they fail to get any work they move to Rourkela as seasonal migrants to work either as contract labour in the steel plant or as informal sector workers such as coolies (luggage and weight-lifters), cycle rickshaw pullers, unskilled construction workers, domestic maids/servants, and the like.

In the initial years, the steel plant generated thousands of organised sector jobs with the result that the entire Sundargarh district was rated as the most developed district among the thirteen old and undivided districts of Orissa (Meher 1999). However, those organised industrial sector jobs generated by the steel plant were monopolised and cornered by outsiders from different parts of the country, and also by people from the relatively more advanced coastal districts of the state. With the fast depletion of forest and other self-sustaining natural resources, tribals and other weaker sections of the population in the hinterland have been converted into unskilled wageworkers, while the city has witnessed the growth of massive informal sector activities generating urban poverty and slums.

III
The city, industry and the ecology

With the setting up of a public sector steel plant in the backward region of the Chota Nagpur plateau, the unknown tribal village of Rourkela has now become an important urban-industrial centre, although agriculture in the region remains in its traditional and under-developed form. There has been a significant increase in the level of per capita income of city residents.[2] At the time of the 1981 Census, Rourkela alone had more

[2] The per capita annual income of the urban households in Rourkela during 1988–89 was Rs 4,151.40, according to the household survey made by me in the course of my doctoral research. In the same year the per capita annual income of the people in Orissa at current prices was Rs 2,625 and at the all-India level, it was Rs 3,875.20. For details

than 80 per cent of the district's urban population, and 41.88 per cent of the non-household manufacturing sector's workforce. Also, thanks to the industrialisation of Rourkela region, the non-household sector industrial workforce in Sundargarh district in 1981 was as high as 15.74 per cent of the total, whereas at the Orissa state level this was as low as 3.63 per cent. The increasing growth of the city has led to a significant change in the socio-ethnic composition of the population. The urban social structure of the city consists of a heterogeneous and mini-cosmopolitan population, representing the major Indian states and union territories. The growth of an urban-industrial culture has reduced the traditional social barriers between various castes and communities, and between language-based and other types of ethnic groups. Inside the steel plant there is little hindrance to interdining among ex-untouchable and upper-caste workers on the shop floor. Even at the family level, some low-caste workers have been able to establish close social relationships with upper-caste Hindu families, and they unhesitatingly intermingle with one another on all important social occasions like marriages, birthday celebrations, death rituals, etc. Also, in the township nobody is concerned with a person's caste or social identity. The scavengers and sweepers face hardly any problem of social exclusion by upper-caste people at their work site. Although there are problems for the ex-untouchable groups in establishing social relationships at the family level with upper-caste people of similar economic and job status, that in no way affects their work relationship with the latter. In the city, Untouchability is no longer prevalent and practised in any form, unlike in the caste society of rural Orissa. Like the Scheduled Castes/ex-Untouchable population, the Scheduled Tribes population residing in the city and its periphery have undergone a remarkable socio-economic transformation. Some Oraons, Mundas, Kharias, Bhuinyas and Kisans who work in the steel plant and other industries are gradually assimilating into the urban-industrial culture of Rourkela, and seem happy to forsake their former mode of existence.

In contrast to these positive socio-economic transformations and the growth of a relatively open, universalistic, urban social structure at Rourkela, there are, however, many unintended ecological and social

---

see Meher (1994: 192); Government of Orissa (1991: A-6); Government of India (1991: S-3). In contrast, in 1954–55 before the setting up of the steel plant, the per capita income of Rourkela region was Rs 144, and this was almost half the national level per capita income (Misra 1958: 73–74).

effects attendant on the construction of the steel plant. Of late, the Rourkela region has suffered large-scale environmental pollution and ecological degradation. The incessant emission of various types of poisonous gases (carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, iron oxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, etc.) and the release of untreated effluents (hydrogen sulphide, coal tar, fly ash, iron dust, coal dust, etc.) from the steel plant, from other industries and from automobiles plying in the city have resulted in the large scale pollution of land, air and water. The residents of the city, and especially the vulnerable sections, have fallen victim to various types of pollution-related diseases like asthma, tuberculosis, cancer, heart disease, jaundice, dysentery, gastroenteritis and burning and irritation of the eyes and nose. The cultivable lands of the region have lost their fertility, while the decline of the forest area and the loss of tree coverage have led to abnormal precipitation in the region (Meher 1994).

Over the years Rourkela has grown into a big, Class I town of Orissa. In functional terms it is classified as an industrial city (Figure 1), but, apart from this, the city has in recent years begun gaining importance as the main commercial centre of the region. The early Master Plan of the city had envisaged that with the full-fledged functioning of the steel plant, the total population in the city would grow to a level of 2–2.5 lakhs; in fact the town presently accommodates around five lakh people, increasingly employed in the informal and unorganised sector economy.[3]

With the consequent proliferation of slums and the distortion of the city's plan, there has been a marked deterioration in the quality of life. Over the years the civic bodies of the city have failed to maintain and develop basic civic amenities for the urban residents[4] (see Table 1). Excepting the supply provision of potable water and the facilities for higher and vocational education, the availability rate of all other basic amenities in the city has registered a significant fall over the years from 1971 to 1981 and 1991. The worsening of the four main civic amenity indicators, i.e., (*i*) percentage of *pucca* road to total road length; (*ii*) number of latrines per 100 households; (*iii*) percentage of domestic electricity

[3] According to an estimate, the percentage distribution of the informal sector workforce in the Class I towns of Orissa has increased over the years. In 1971 the percentage of informal sector workers in Rourkela was 46.90, which increased to 51.85 in 1981 and came down to 49.01 in 1991. For details see Meher (1995. 63).

[4] It may be mentioned that till 1995 the Rourkela urban agglomerate comprised of two different civic bodies, namely Rourkela Municipality for the civil town area and Notified Area Council (NAC) for the steel township (ST) area. The NAC (ST) is now merged with the Rourkela Minicipality.

Figure 1
Rourkela Urban Agglomeration

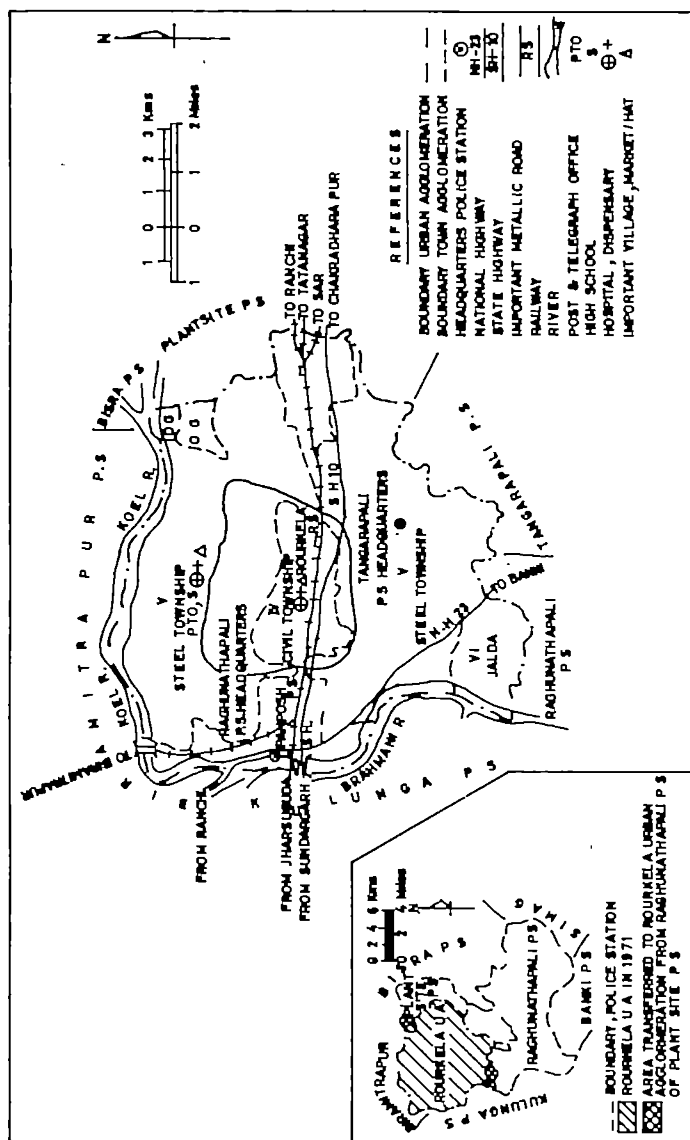


Table 1
Availability of Basic Amenities at Rourkela, 1971–91

SL No.	Amenities	*Rourkela U.A.*			*Rourkela Civil Town*			*Rourkela Steel Town*		
		1971	*1981*	*1991*	*1971*	*1981*	*1991*	*1971*	*1981*	*1991*
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*
1.	% of *pucca* road to total road	99 19	81.95	82.45	85.71	81.19	–	100.00	82.19	–
2.	Population density per sq. km (in thousand)	1.42	2.32	2.54	2.14	–	–	1.26	–	1.78
3.	No. of latrines per 100 HHs	57	45	38	–	28	21	–	56	56
4.	Per capita availability of potable water (in ltrs)	44.84	38.05	–	48.33	615.6	–	43.53	296.7	–
5.	% of domestic connection of electricity to total no. of HHs	46.38	38.66	52.41	13.91	25.80	30.00	58.21	46.94	67.24
6.	No. of road light points per km of road	22.64	16.69	13.81	40.71	8.17	10.80	21.55	19.37	26.72
7.	No. of hospitals, dispensaries per 10,000 population	0.81	0.77	0.65	1.06	0.94	0.71	0.72	0 75	0 65
8	No. of beds available for patients per 10,000 population	33.40	19.90	16.10	19.10	12.20	8.33	38.70	24 50	24.36
9.	No. of general colleges per 10,000 population	0.17	0.22	0.55	0.00	0.10	–	0.24	0.28	–
10.	No. of vocational schools/institutions per 10,000 population	0.23	0.46	–	0.42	0.319	–	0.16	0.56	–
11.	No. of secondary schools per 10,000 population	0.46	0.96	–	1.70	0.73	–	0.32	1.12	–
12.	No. of primary and middle schools per 10,000 population	2.61	2.36	1.88	4.25	2.70	2.14	1.99	2.10	1.81

Source: *Census of India*, 1971, 1981 and 1991. Census Series-16, Orissa, Town Directory.

connection to total number of households; and (*iv*) number of road light points per kilometre of road length clearly show the high rate of growth in city slums and squatter areas that has accompanied the proliferation of unorganised and informal economic activities. Since the city continues to grow at an alarming rate, fed by the stream of poor and lowly-skilled people from the countryside, and government funds for the

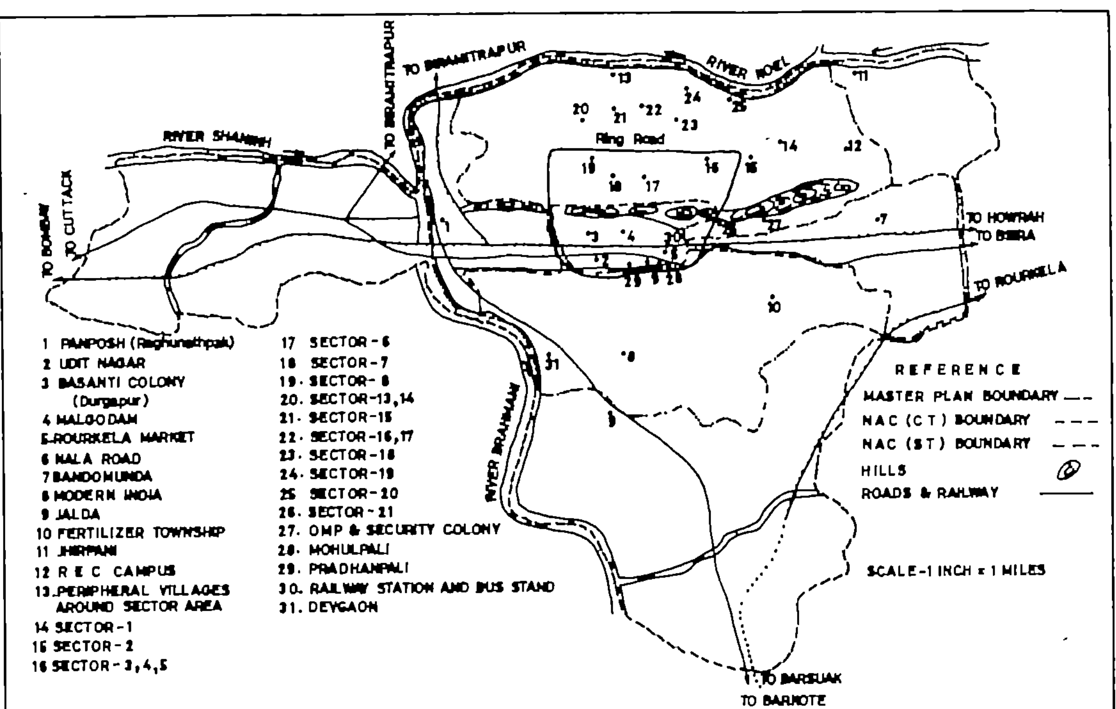
development of basic infrastructure and civic amenities remain severely limited, the desired level of infrastructural support is assured to only a small fraction of the population. This has resulted in spatial division and segmentation of the population, polarised on the basis of caste, region, language and ethnicity and operationalised through competition and dominance, as well as through institutional requirements like land use restrictions and building byelaws. As in many other cities of the developing world, the limited development of infrastructural facilities and basic civic amenities in this city is skewed in favour of the relatively affluent localities.

Table 1 shows that, with regard to the availability of various basic amenities in the twin townships of the city, the steel township is relatively better off than the civil town area. Furthermore, according to our observation, there is a wide difference in the rate of availability of such basic services among the various localities of these townships (see Figure 2). Within the steel township boundary, the sector areas and the fertiliser township area are infrastructurally well-developed, with an underground sewerage and drainage system, neat and clean asphalt roads, and a wide coverage of trees, gardens, parks and playgrounds. The staff quarters accommodating plant employees and their families in these localities are all provided with modern basic amenities such as latrines, bathrooms, underground sewerage, tap water and electricity connections. However, within the various sectors there is a further discrimination in the rate of availability and maintenance of such amenities: the residential sectors of steel workers such as sectors 1–2 and the localities of the other sectors accommodating lower grade plant workers are shabbily maintained compared to sectors 19, 3, 4 and 5, which mostly accommodate steel plant executives and higher grade officials.

The lower grade steel plant workers are provided with one-bedroom, asbestos-roofed accommodation which is unbearably hot in the sweltering heat of the Rourkela summer (besides the fact that asbestos roofing is a health hazard). Apart from this, the living conditions of unorganised and informal sector workers in the unauthorised slums and lower grade workers' colonies of the steel township area encircling the steel plant and its township (Khariabahal, Modern India Labour Colony, Gaja Laxmi Market, Construction Colony, Golghar, Captive Power Plant Jhonpri, Tarapur, Kalinga Auto Colony, Lal Tanki, etc.) are indescribably bad. Except for a few bore wells or broken public water stand posts, cycleable *kutcha* roads and a few poorly maintained street light points, hardly any provision for basic amenities has been made for these colonies. The

Figure 2

Master Plan and the Selected Localities of Rourkela



majority of the houses do not have electricity connections, and there is no drainage or sewerage system. The workers and their families residing in these colonies defecate in open spaces and bathe in the nearby ponds and wells, or at the leakage points of the water supply pipes and public water stand posts. The environmental surroundings of these localities are worsening with each day.

People residing at the boundary wall of the steel plant in the Modern India Labour Colony are exposed to poisonous gases such as benzene, anthracine vapour, carbon monoxide, iron oxide, etc., which leak or are occasionally discharged from the coke ovens and the by-products plants located nearby. There are high levels of concentration of coal dust, iron dust, iron oxide, sulphur oxide, benzene, anthracine vapour, nitric oxide, etc., in the air of the localities adjacent to the plant, especially the Modern India Labour Colony, Gaja Laxmi Market, Lal Tanki, Tarapur and Construction Colony. The trees in the Modern India locality are dull and leafless even in spring. People residing in this locality since the early 1960s say that only of late, particularly after the 1970s, have they experienced acute health problems caused by dust and air pollution. Diseases like jaundice and malaria have also taken an endemic form. Besides, many residents in these localities suffer from various types of eye ailments, hypertension, paralysis of the face and limbs, gastroenteritis, asthma, tuberculosis, etc., due to the acute environmental pollution caused by the steel plant. The Construction Colony, which houses around 500 workers of the steel plant, is so seriously polluted that the residents had sent a representation to the late Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, in the early 1980s to look into the environmental pollution problems of the locality. This colony, surrounded by the steel plant, fertiliser plant and Indian Detonators Limited, is situated next to the main drain of the fertiliser and the by-products plants. The plants release liquid naphtha, various undissolved chemicals and contaminated water into this drain, acutely affecting the environment of the locality. In 1981, a fire broke out in the main drain when the naphtha released by the plant caught fire; three persons of the colony were burnt to death in the fire, apart from a heavy loss of property. The effluents discharged by the water treatment plant as well as the waste treatment plant of the Rourkela Steel Plant have formed a lagoon in the vicinity of this colony, and the hot slag dumping ground of the blast furnace is also located nearby.

While the supply of basic amenities and the quality of life of the people residing within various localities of the steel township are uneven, the situation is far worse for those residing outside the steel township. In the

Civil Town area, localities like Udit Nagar and Basanti Colony near the central business district of the city and the Area Nos 7 and 8 near Panposh are well-developed and better served with basic amenities than the old residential localities like Oraon Para, Kumbhar Para, Gandhi Road, Plant Site Road, etc. Adjacent to the central business district, the railway station and the main gate of the Rourkela Steel Plant, the process of urban growth in the civil town area has led to the formation of many slums and squatter areas (Malgodam, Madhusudan Palli, Kavi Samrat Palli, Gopabandhu Palli, Nala Road, Mohulpali, etc.). There the living conditions of the people are even worse than in the unauthorised slums and squatter areas of the steel township. Located nearer the steel plant as well as the central business district zone, the dwellers here are the worst victims of the land, air, water and dust pollution caused by the giant steel plant and many other commercial and small industrial establishments, while the emissions from the large number of motor vehicles plying in the busy market areas of the city add to their miseries.

Except the Nala Road area inhabited mostly by Muslims, the other slum localities of the civil town consist usually of one room *jhonpris* with no separate kitchen, accommodating six to seven persons; in Malgodam even ten to twelve persons may be huddled together in one room. People residing in such localities are the poor, informal sector, migrant workers with unsteady sources of income. Excluding a few families with small children incapable of looking after themselves and no elderly person to take care of them, both husband and wife and also their grown-up sons and daughters are typically self-employed or work as daily wage earners in informal and unorganised types of jobs. Some of them work as construction workers in various work sites of the city, and also in the steel plant as contract labour. Some others work as skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the small and unorganised sector industries (garages, petty commercial and service establishments and the like), while others are self-employed rickshaw pullers, vegetable vendors, plumbers, carpenters, masons, painters, etc.

Excepting a few service latrines built by the Muslim households of the Nala Road area, none of the houses in these slum and squatter settlements has any toilet facility, nor do these localities have piped water supply. The availability rate of the few bore wells or hand pumps works out to one bore well for every 150 families. However, people report that the water of the bore well is hard and unpalatable, possibly due to the contamination of ground water with iron oxide and other undissolved and untreated chemicals released by the steel plant and various other

industries. Since there is no drainage and sewerage system, the localities are invariably flooded with untreated sewage and waste water, which have become breeding grounds for mosquitoes and flies which, in their turn spread many endemic contagious diseases like diarrhoea, measles, jaundice; typhoid, etc. There are very few street light points and only a lucky few have electricity connections in their self-acquired but unauthorised huts. Domestic waste, covered by dirt and dust, is scattered all over the roads. Added to this, in the absence of private or community latrines, residents defecate in the nearby open space across the railway line.

The overcrowded and polluted environment, coupled with fluctuating income levels, has led to a disruption of community life, social disorganisation, the intensification of crime, and rebelliousness among a large section of the people. Malgodam, the biggest slum of the city, which houses migrants from Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal as well as from the eastern and western parts of Orissa, is notorious for frequent social disturbances and a high crime rate. The family life of the people in this slum is highly unstable. There is a high level of marital breakdown and desertion. Elopements are quite common, cutting across the boundaries of caste, community, language and region. Drinking of country liquor among both men and women is rampant, and a significant proportion of earnings is spent on alcohol. Generally, the slum dwellers survive on a diet of rice, salt, onion, potato and cheap pulses. From rice, the tribal slum dwellers prepare a type of liquor called *handia*, which serves as food and drink for everybody at home, including the children. Many people suffer from tuberculosis and other lung diseases, besides which, some young and middle-aged people, especially among the tribals and migrant workers of the Bilaspur region of Chhattisgarh state, are reported to be suffering from venereal diseases.

In addition to many environment-related diseases such as asthma, tuberculosis, respiratory disorders, cancer, leprosy, heart diseases, paralysis, jaundice, skin and eye diseases and the like, workers in the steel plant suffer from various types of occupational health hazards. Furthermore, many of the workers in small and unorganised sector industries like engineering and metal-based units work in unprotected environments with little in the way of medical relief provisions, though they face similar health hazards to those of the steel plant workers. This is especially the case for those who work at the coke ovens, blast furnaces, steel melting shop, sintering plant, by-products plant and the fertiliser plant. As there is no provision for inter-shop transfer, long years of working in these units expose the workers to high levels of dust pollution and cause serious

diseases like tuberculosis, asthma, paralysis, neurological disorders, cataract of the eyes, hypertension and rheumatic diseases. Moreover, with insufficient light in the blast furnaces and the coke oven area, workers in the night shift virtually risk losing their lives while at work. There are many posters directing the workers to wear helmets, footwear, hand gloves, safety goggles, gas masks, ear plugs and the like, but the workers complain that they are provided minimal safety equipment, excepting boots, helmets and hand gloves.

Besides the steel plant, there are many fabrication and machine units, including garages and small workshops, functioning in the busy market area and densely populated localities of the civil town, which freely discharge their gaseous and liquid effluents into the atmosphere, the open fields or the normal sewerage channels of the city, exposing people, animals and vegetation in the neighbourhood to serious health problems.

Indeed, with the increasing industrialisation and urbanisation of the region (i.e., the Rourkela–Rajgangpur belt) and the high prevalence of pollution-causing industries like iron and steel, cement, refractory, engineering and chemicals, the whole district of Sundargarh has in recent years started facing severe environmental problems. The morbidity rate is very high. From the recorded diagnosis reports of patients affected by various diseases in the thirteen undivided districts of Orissa during the year 1980, it was found that the prevalence rate of pollution-related diseases like tuberculosis and respiratory diseases, dysentery and malaria in the district of Sundargarh was highest among all the districts of the state. Besides, the district had a very high number of cases of syphilis, filarial, leprosy and infective hepatitis (Government of Orissa 1985: 165–77).

Our random sample survey of 316 Rourkela households in 1988–89 revealed that during the previous ten years, on an average 14.8 persons per 1,000 had suffered from various types of water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea, gastritis, jaundice and the like every year. The morbidity rate of other pollution-linked diseases per 1,000 population was: respiratory diseases like tuberculosis and asthma 4.8; heart diseases 1.2; cancer 0.2; malaria 5.8, eye diseases 2.6; paralysis 1.2; rheumatism 2.2; and other miscellaneous diseases 3.2. On the whole, an average of thirty-nine persons out of every 1,000 in the sample had suffered from various types of ailments traceable to water and air pollution in the city (Table 2). This health scenario corroborates the findings of Dr T.K. Bose, Chief Medical Officer of the Ispat General Hospital, Rourkela (Bose 1987). In a random study of the health status of 1,500 workers in the Rourkela Steel Plant, 6 per cent of them were found to suffer from respiratory

Table 2
Number of Persons per Thousand Population in the Sample Affected by Various Pollution-related Diseases at Rourkela Every Year

Sl No.	Name of the Diseases	No of Affected Persons per 1,000 Population
1	2	3
1.	Water-borne diseases	14.8
	Diarrhoea	4 0
	Gastritis	6.2
	Jaundice	3 5
	Typhoid	0.4
	Skin diseases	0 7
2.	Respiratory Diseases	4.8
	Tuberculosis	1.8
	Asthma	2.7
	Others	0.3
3	Heart disease	1.2
4.	Cancer	0.2
5.	Malaria	5 8
6.	Chickenpox	1.7
7.	Eye diseases	2.6
8.	Blood pressure	1 4
9.	Paralysis	1.2
10.	Rheumatism	2.2
11.	Other diseases	3 1
	Total	39 0

Source: Meher (1994), Table 6.20, p. 244.

diseases, and 14.9 per cent showed high eosinophil content. A follow up study of 1,113 workers working in the dusty areas of the steel plant further revealed that 3.2 per cent suffered from asthma, 4.8 per cent suffered from chronic respiratory diseases, and 3.3 per cent suffered from tuberculosis (ibid.: 80).

Similarly, in our sample of 316 households, sixty-four persons were reported to have died from various causes, including old age, during 1984–89. Although the death rate per 1,000 of the sample population was 7.11 per annum, as compared to around 13–14 at the all-India level, it was found that death had occurred due to old age in only 15.62 per cent of the cases. In the remaining cases death occurred relatively early (at less than 60 years) due to pollution-related diseases like respiratory and lung infections leading to tuberculosis and asthma (17.19 per cent), heart disease (7.81 per cent), paralysis (9.37 per cent), diarrhoea and

dysentery (10.94 per cent), cancer (4.69 per cent) and the like (Meher 1994).

IV
Impact of industry on the local population

As mentioned earlier, the government's decision to set up a public sector steel plant in the mineral-rich backward region of Orissa was taken with a view to reducing regional imbalances in economic development. However, the establishment of the steel plant at Rourkela led to the acquisition of 13,185.31 hectares or 131.85 sq. km of land and the displacement of 23,400 persons, of whom 11,300 (48.29 per cent) were tribals. Among the oustees only 4,607 (19.6 per cent) persons could be provided with employment, while the remainder were forced to depend either on poor quality agricultural land in the resettlement sites or on the market forces of demand and supply of wage labour (Fernandes, Das and Rao 1989: 75). In its early phase of functioning, the industry mostly depended on jobbers and contractors for the supply of both skilled and unskilled labour, with the result that very few locals, including the tribals, could be absorbed in the newly created industrial jobs generated by the steel plant and other downstream and upstream industries at Rourkela: according to Vithal Babu, in the case of Rourkela, only 161 of 5,973 able-bodied displaced persons in the late 1950s were provided with regular employment: 223 as 'work-charged' (presumably on contractual labour jobs) and 630 as 'muster roll workers' (registered unskilled and semi-skilled wage workers, to be taken in regular employment if and when vacancies occur). The remainder were idle and unemployed, living from day to day on the compensation paid by the steel project authorities, while skilled, semi-skilled and even unskilled workers were brought by contractors from different parts of the country, mainly from outside the province (Babu 1959: 237). Of course, it is also important to note that the local tribals, being unused to the culture and disciplinary norms of wage work, were not interested in working at the construction site of the steel plant and its township in unskilled category jobs, either as regular salaried workers or casual wage-workers. At the time of my field study, people of the older generation who had been eye-witnesses to the birth and growth of the steel plant in the 1950s and 1960s reported that the plant authorities were initially quite interested in engaging them in wage work at the different work sites. Even the contractors were virtually dragging them out of their houses for unskilled wage work. But many of them were unwilling to

work at the site where huge power-operated machines, including cranes, dredgers and dynamite, were used. Also, since many of them were not used to wage work in a closed environment for specific hours of the day and night, they showed little interest. As a result, outsiders took advantage of the situation. In fact, it was only after five/six years of regular operation of the plant, when the local tribal population could see the marked changes that had occurred in the life-styles of the few tribal oustees who had been absorbed into unskilled category jobs at the steel plant, that many of them were tempted to apply for the regular jobs.

However, owing to the informal operation of particularistic recruitment norms like caste, kin, language and region, most of the semi-skilled and unskilled jobs, including new vacancies subsequently created in the wake of the expansion of production capacity, were monopolised by upper-caste workers from coastal Orissa and non-Oriyas. Although Backward Castes, including the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, constitute more than 70 per cent of the state's population, very few could get regular jobs in the steel plant due to a lack of technical education or the right socio-political connections. According to the 1991 Census, the tribal population in the district of Sundargarh was as much as 50.74 per cent of the total, but the percentage of tribal workers in non-household sector industrial jobs in the district was less than 25 per cent. As compared to the aggregate district level figure (61.59 per cent), a greater percentage (82.24 per cent) of the tribal workers earn their livelihood in traditional primary sector occupations such as agriculture and allied activities (see Table 3). The upper castes predominate in almost all modern non-farm occupations, like industrial manufacturing, trade, transport, storage and communications, and also in other white-collar jobs.

A fairly substantial number of people from the coastal region of Orissa, and also from the neighbouring states of West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, are working in the steel plant as also in other industrial and commercial establishments of the city. A large number of workers are drawn from certain villages and regions in coastal Orissa, such as Polosora, Netinga, Gahama, and Origad in undivided Ganjam district, Editala in undivided Balasore district, and Beruna in undivided Cuttack district. In contrast, the peripheral villages like Brahmanitarang, Luakera, Jhirpani, Jalda, Deogaon, etc., have very few steel plant employees or workers in the formal and organised industrial sector. The tribals and lower-caste migrants from the home district, and also from the neighbouring districts in Orissa such as Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Bolangir and Kalahandi, and from Ranchi, Gumla and Singhbhum districts of the

Table 3
Occupational Classification of Workers and Non-workers for the Total Population and the Scheduled Tribes of Sundargarh District, Orissa, 1981

Sl. No.	*Occupational Category*	*Total Population (in %)*	*S.T Population (in %)*
1	*2*	*3*	*4*
1.	Total population	100.00	51.26
2.	Total main workers	32.41	33.30
	Cultivators	37.65	51.68
	Agricultural labourers	18.11	24.11
	Livestock, forestry, fishing, mining, etc.	4 48	5.96
	Household industry	2.47	0.91
	Non-household industry	15.74	7.71
	Construction	2.10	2.14
	Trade and commerce	4.97	0.82
	Transport, storage and communications	3.78	1.86
	Other services	10 70	5.32
3.	Marginal workers	6.58	8.57
4.	Non-workers	61.01	58.13
5.	Unemployed seeking work	–	1.91

Source: *Census of India* (1981). General economic tables, part III (A & B), and Special tables for scheduled tribes, part IX, Series-16, Orissa. Orissa: Director of Census Operations.

present Jharkhand state, mostly earn their livelihood in the informal sector of Rourkela by working as rickshaw pullers, coolies, construction workers, street peddlers, vegetable vendors, sweepers, and the like (Meher 1994). The migrant tribal workers of the region work mostly as contract labour for the steel plant, that too in hazardous jobs (Sengupta 1983), or else end up in the city's informal sector economy. In his study of the labour market in the steel towns of India, Crook observes that in the public sector steel cities, access to protected work is denied to increasing numbers of people of the depressed categories. Over the years the steel plants have preferred to employ up to 20 per cent of their workforce on a contractual basis, who are denied the facilities enjoyed by the permanent core workers. These contract workers, who are mostly drawn from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are not unionised (Crook 1993: 349–50).

Of course, this type of development is not unusual, but is an all-India phenomenon. In a hierarchical, inegalitarian society, patron–client ties and loyalty factors count for more than the merit, technical competence

and formal educational level of workers in both organised and unorganised economic sectors, particularly for semi-skilled and unskilled types of jobs. In an earlier study, Sheth (1968) had shown how the factory management manipulates caste networks to recruit loyal workers. Unskilled workers in the Bulsar region of Gujarat are recruited to various jobs in the Government and industry by articulating patron-client and neighbourhood ties (Breman 1979; van der Veen 1979). In the case of another public sector undertaking, the Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), Bhopal, a similarly particularistic recruitment of workers for the semi-skilled and unskilled category of regular jobs in the plant was reportedly quite pervasive during the early years of construction and commissioning in the 1950s and 1960s (Kundu, Misra and Meher 1986). It appears from the growth history of many industrial-urban centres in India that the early phase of migration of workers to the towns and cities, whether due to push or pull factors, often took the form of a link-based migration operationalised through local jobbers and middlemen. In subsequent phases, migrants moved from particular regions to those towns and cities where their people had already established a niche in certain trades or occupations, and where caste, kin, linguistic, ethnic or regional ties initially ensured their shelter through a transitory period of unemployment in the city. Then, with the help of the earlier migrants, the late arrivals looked for both formal and informal types of jobs in the city. Over the years this process resulted in the caste- and region-specific specialisation of jobs in the urban labour market. As evidence shows, this partial monopolisation of jobs by people of certain castes, religions, regions or linguistic groups is a widespread urban phenomenon in job-scarce, labour-surplus economies such as that of India and of several other Third World countries (Gilbert and Gugler 1987; Holmstrom 1985; Hugo 1977; Rollwagen 1971).

In Table 3, we see that although around 57 per cent of main workers in Sundargarh district in 1991 earned their livelihood from agriculture, either as cultivators or agricultural labourers, in the case of tribals this was as high as 77 per cent. More so, out of those 77 per cent tribal agricultural workers, 24 per cent (or nearly one-third of the total) were landless agricultural labourers. Besides this, 5.45 per cent of the tribal main workers were engaged in other primary sector occupations like livestock, forestry, mining and quarrying, etc., whereas in the case of the district at the aggregate level, this was only 4.90 per cent. Notwithstanding the greater dependence of the tribal population of the district on agriculture, the average operational holding of cultivable land in Sundargarh has in fact registered

a marked decline from a level of 7.9 acres in 1954 to only 4.27 acres in 1990–91, according to the Agricultural Census of the Board of Revenue, Government of Orissa (Government of Orissa 1995b: 198–201; Misra 1958: 50). It may be noted that while a socio-economic survey of 92 revenue villages around Rourkela conducted by the Government of Orissa in the early 1950s revealed only 4.6 per cent landless agricultural labour households (Misra 1958), increasing land alienation in the wake of industrialisation and urbanisation has now reduced many tribals to the status of landless wage labour.

Sundargarh is agriculturally one of the most backward districts in Orissa, and the latter is considered one of the most poor and backward states of the Indian Union in respect to both industry and agriculture. In the year 1990–91, while the average size of operational land holdings in the district was 1.73 hectares, as against 0.34 hectares at the all-Orissa level, the per capita availability of food grains in the district during the year 1994–95 was only 155 kgs, as against 203 kgs at the all-Orissa level. During the year 1993–94 the yield rate of the state's principal crop, paddy, was only 9.45 quintals per hectare in Sundargarh district, whereas this was 14.32 quintals at the state level (Government of Orissa 1995a: 5; Government of Orissa 1995b: 250).

Against this background of low agricultural productivity and decline in the average size of operational holdings of cultivable land from 8 acres in 1950s to 4 acres in 1990s, it is significant that the dependence of the tribal population of Sundargarh district on agriculture has registered a marked increase in recent years. Despite this, a survey of peripheral villages around Rourkela revealed that, at present, the majority of the tribal households are not in a position to earn their subsistence solely from agriculture, which for the majority of households supplies merely four to six months of their annual food requirements. In these circumstances, they must turn to wage work for survival.

Moreover, with the setting up of the steel plant at Rourkela, the forest coverage of the district registered a marked decline, from 54.18 per cent in 1965–66 to 38.18 per cent in 1985–86. By a simple linear regression method, the average decline of forest area during the period is estimated to be 1.4 per cent per annum, while simultaneously the rainfall of the district has now become more erratic. In the absence of adequate irrigation coverage, the district is frequently afflicted with drought and crop failure. The normal annual rainfall of the district is 164.76 cms. However, between 1965 and 1987 the recorded actual average annual rainfall was only 123.43 cms and the estimated χ^2 value of the actually recorded rainfall

for the said period is significant at 1 per level of significance (Meher 1994). While the district's forest statistics now show a marked increase in forest area, thanks to the Government's afforestation programme, the reality is altogether different. My visit to the peripheral and far-off villages of both Panposh and Bonai sub-divisions of the district surrounding the Rourkela industrial region reveals that the region is now completely denuded of its pristine dense forest. The intensification of mining activities in the region has not only led to the decline of the forest cover, but has also adversely affected the self-sustaining forms of livelihood that had earlier pertained among the aboriginal population.

Before the industrialisation of the Rourkela region, tribals were leading lives of sustainable subsistence, depending on primitive agriculture and a regenerative forest economy. With the commercial exploitation of forests and the extensive mining of minerals and metals, the tribals of the region, whose sustainable subsistence was dependent on minor forest produce such as edible fruits, leafs and tubers, were gradually deprived of their common property resources. Moreover, with the opening of tribal lands in the wake of industrialisation, the tribe-caste interaction was intensified. This resulted in marked changes in tribal life-styles, changes in food habits and dress, and the rise of a new materialistic and acquisitive culture in a context of acute competition and caste-tribe conflict over scarce natural resources. The region is now flooded with highly skilled, educated plains people, while the tribals have become pauperised; their own resource base is shrinking and encroached upon by industry and also by outsiders. The number of wage earners and unemployed among the tribals is increasing by leaps and bounds. Many among the educated tribals are now forced to remain underemployed and unemployed, as there is little possibility of their getting any organised industrial or tertiary sector employment in and around Rourkela, while the illiterate and semi-educated among the tribals have been virtually deprived of their traditional means of livelihood as wage employment opportunities in this industrial region have become more precarious.

Soon after the completion of the steel plant's modernisation programme in the 1990s, the steel industry in the country as a whole has been affected by the problem of recession. There has been a continuous fall in steel prices due to open import of steel and iron from the international market at much cheaper prices. In this scenario, the Rourkela Steel Plant has now been converted from its status as a profit-making public sector unit into that of a loss-making unit of the SAIL, as the debt-servicing cost of the plant has increased phenomenally in the wake of modernisation. This

has generated multiple negative effects in the local labour market of the region, and also in the service sector economy, including trade and commerce. This industrial city, which was more prosperous and commercially more vibrant than the state capital, Bhubaneswar, from the 1960s to 1980s, now looks almost like a sick and marooned city. In this situation, the condition of the occupationally displaced tribals and other marginalised groups of people has become more precarious.

It was revealed during the 1981 Census that while only 0.60 per cent of the state population was unemployed at the all-Orissa level, the tribal population of Sundargarh district had an unemployment rate as high as 1.91 per cent of the total.[5] Although the Rourkela urban agglomerate and the Sundargarh district as such have a relatively larger percentage of workers in non-household manufacturing, this has shown a marked decline over the years. Much of the employment in the Rourkela Steel Plant was generated in the late 1950s and early 1960s, especially in the commissioning stage (1958–62) when the employment figure shot up from 4,000 to 25,000. It is reported that in 1983 the steel plant had around 39,000 regular workers on its pay roll (Sengupta 1983). However, the number of regular workers employed by the steel plant has declined significantly in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The number of contract workers has also shown a wide variation annually, but with a declining trend, with numbers never reaching the figure of the early 1980s. By March 1996 the strength of regular employees in the steel plant stood at 34,000, while the number of contract workers was fewer than 6,000. These days the management does not encourage the employment of casual and contract workers. At the same time, it plans to reduce regular employment by about 5,000 workers after modernisation.

V

Conclusion

The large-scale migration of tribal people to Rourkela from the rural hinterland in recent years and their dependence on the informal sector

[5] These figures are computed from the 1981 Census data of the General Economic Tables and Special Tables for Scheduled Tribes of Orissa. It may be mentioned that the non-workers in the census are divided into seven sub-categories: (*i*) full time students; (*ii*) household duties; (*iii*) dependents and infants; (*iv*) beggars, vagrants, etc.; (*v*) retired persons and those of independent means; (*vi*) inmates of penal, mental and charitable institutions; and (*vii*) others. The last category of non-workers encompasses unemployed people looking for work.

economy of the city can in no way be characterised as upward mobility of the aboriginal population of the region. Rather, they may be called 'ecological refugees' in the city, struggling hard to eke out a subsistence and finally bearing the brunt of the environmental pollution generated by the Rourkela Steel Plant.

It is not only Rourkela or the tribal populations of Sundargarh that are being pauperised due to the one-dimensional industrial development designed at the top to serve the interests of the privileged sections of society. The entire industrial belt of Chota Nagpur, stretching from Durg-Bhilai in Chhattisgarh to Rajgangpur-Rourkela in Orissa, Ranchi-Bokaro and Jamsedpur in Jharkhand and Durgapur in West Bengal, has experienced a similar type of development, where the aboriginal population are reduced to being distressed migrants in the modern urban-industrial centres of their own homelands (see Mathew 1989; Reddy 1994; Sachchidananda and Mandal 1985; Vidyarthi 1970). It is they who mostly reside in the slums and squatter colonies of the modern cities, earn their bread in the proliferating informal sector economy at below subsistence level, and suffer most the ill-effects of environmental pollution and ecological degradation.

Given the inadequate land revenue records of the ex-Princely State of Gangpur, many of the displaced tribals of Rourkela could not be properly rehabilitated. From their independent self-employed status in agriculture and the forest economy, the tribals have become wandering wage-earners in the informal sector urban economy, their traditional sources of livelihood now almost lost. The domination of the upper-caste Hindus in the organised sector jobs of the region leaves them with little scope to enter the formal job market. Extensive mining activities in the entire Panposh and Bonai sub-divisions of Sundargarh have destroyed dense forests and fertile agricultural lands, and the tribals are now dependent upon the unsustainable mining economy by hiring themselves out as daily wage earners. When they fail to get work, they migrate to Rourkela as turnover and seasonal migrants, working either as contract labour of the steel plant or as informal sector workers such as *coolies*, rickshaw pullers, unskilled construction workers, domestic maids, and the like.

As in other parts of the country, the modern industrial-urban society that has grown up at Rourkela has more or less mimicked the traditional, particularistic and hierarchical Indian caste society. The resource and income distribution arising from industrialisation and urbanisation is skewed in favour of the upper castes and privileged sections of society (Meher 1994). Like other public sector steel cities such as Bhilai, Bokaro,

Durgapur, etc., Rourkela, a melting-pot of people hailing from different parts of the country, presents a more cosmopolitan look than other cities of Orissa. However, due to the marginalised status of the local population in the steel plant and the claims of the younger generation among them for a rightful share in the plant in terms of regular jobs, the city is now beginning to witness various types of ethnic tensions and regionalism. No doubt the city retains some features of both the melting-pot model as well as the Indian 'salad bowl' model, in which the ingredients retain their distinctiveness (eg., The Bhilai Steel Plant [Parry 1999: 138]). But unfortunately each ingredient in the 'salad bowl' of Rourkela does not transcend its individuality through the presence of others. Instead in a job-scarce scenario and with the downsizing of the steel plant workforce, the 'salad bowl' model of the city population in Rourkela creates conflict-like situations between different ethnic groups. Moreover, the large-scale migration and rural exodus of people to this urban-industrial complex is often network-based migration, leading to the partial monopolisation of different types of jobs in the city by different caste, ethnic, linguistic or regional groups. These contradictory social forces have in fact worked in such a manner that they have ruptured the relatively open, universalistic urbanism that was expected to develop at Rourkela. The recent slowing down of the pace of industrialisation is creating various sorts of social turmoil and disturbances. The level of unemployment among the younger generation is becoming very acute. Loss of agricultural land and the migrant population's quasi-monopolistic hold over the limited job opportunities created in the regional economy of Rourkela is making the tribal youths and the local caste-Hindu population restless. 'Nativism' and 'sons of the soil' movements have gained in strength, threatening to destroy the cosmopolitan character of the city.

Added to this is evidence of the rupture of the symbiosis between industry, ecology and society in Rourkela. This rupture has occurred not only because of run-away industrialisation and the use of modern technology, but also because residents of the city have neglected the serious problems of environmental pollution. It is astonishing to observe that very few people in this industrial city show concern for or are aware of the state of ecology and urban environmental decay. Although many of the workers suffer from occupational health hazards caused by the arsenic elements discharged by the steel plant, very few talk about environmental pollution. Even the major trade unions concerned with more immediate bread and butter issues of the city keep quiet about the health hazards

generated by the steel plant and the ecological degradation in the city. The skewed distribution pattern of civic amenities across space and different segments of the population has further distorted and compounded the problem of urban living for the poor. The slums and the localities inhabited by the poor informal sector workers are the main victims of urban industrial pollution. It is true that environmental problems affect everyone, but some are more affected than others: in general the urban poor and tribals face more pollution hazards, job insecurity and low income, all of which further weaken their competitive capability.

The experience of industry-led development and change in the Rourkela region clearly shows that the present developmental model, which is based on a GNP-led economic growth indifferent to the 'Quality of Life' and on the maintenance of symbiosis between industry, ecology and human society, may prove a failure in the long run. The present development model generates a number of contradictions, promoting the culture of an over-aggressive individualism and uncritical economic expansionism at the cost of the depletion of scarce resources, and the deprivation and displacement of the weaker sections from their traditional sources of livelihood.

REFERENCES

BABU, V. 1959. *Report on a preliminary inquiry on the growth of steel towns in India*. Calcutta: UNESCO Research Centre.

BOSE, T.K. 1987. Occupational health hazards in steel industry. *Souvenir—Indian Institute of Occupational Health*. 37th All India Conference, January.

BREESE, G. 1969. *Urbanization in newly developing countries*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall.

BREMAN, J. 1979. The market for non-agrarian labour: The formal versus informal sector. *In* S.D. Pillai and C. Baks, eds, *Winners and losers: Styles of development in an Indian region*, pp. 122–66. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

CALDWELL, K.K. 1970. Authority and responsibility for environmental administration. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Aocial Science* 389: 107–15.

CENSUS OF INDIA. 1961. *District census handbook—Sundargarh*, Series-15, Orissa. Part-X-A. Bhubaneswar: Director of Census Operations.

COBDEN RAMSAY, L.E B. 1930. *Feudatory states of Orissa*. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot.

COMMONER, B. 1971. *The closing circle*. New York: A. Knoff.

CROOK, N. 1993. Labour and steel towns. *In* P. Robb, ed., *Dalit movements and the meanings of labour in India*, pp. 338–54. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

EHRLICH, P. and A. EHRLICH. 1972. *Population, resources and environment*. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman.

ENZENBERGER, H.M. 1974. A critique of political ecology *New left review* 84: 3–31.
FERNANDES, W., J C. DAS and S. RAO. 1989. Displacement and rehabilitation: An estimate of extent and prospects. *In* W Fernandes and E G. Thukral, eds, *Development, displacement and rehabilitation*, pp 62–88. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute.
FYODOROV, Y. and I. NOVIK. 1977. *Society and the environment: A Soviet view* (Current problems). Moscow: Progress Publishers.
GILBERT, A. and J GUGLER. 1987. *Cities, poverty, and development: Urbanisation in the Third World*. Oxford: ELBS, Oxford University Press.
GORIZONTOV, B. 1985. *Capitalism and the ecological crisis*. Moscow· Progress Publishers.
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA. 1991 *Economic survey, 1990–91*. New Delhi· Ministry of Finance
GOVERNMENT OF ORISSA 1985. *Statistical abstract of Orissa, 1981*. Bhubaneswar· Directorate of Economics and Statistics.
——— 1991. *Economic survey, 1990–91* Bhubaneswar: Planning and Coordination Department.
———. 1995a *District statistical handbook: Sundargarh, 1995*. Bhubaneswar: Directorate of Economics and Statistics.
———. 1995b. *Economic survey, 1994–95*. Bhubaneswar: Planning and Coordination Department.
HOLMSTROM, M. 1985. *Industry and inequality: The social anthropology of Indian labour*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Hyderabad· Orient Longman.
HUGO, G J 1977. Circular migration. *Bulletin of Indonesian economic studies* 13: 57–66.
KOLBASOV, O. 1983. *Ecology, political institutions and legislations*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
KUNDU, A 1980. *Measurement of urban process: A study in regionalisation*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
KUNDU, A., G.K. MISRA and R.K. MEHER. 1986. *Location of public enterprises and regional development*. New Delhi Concept Publishing Company.
LEWIS, W.A. 1954 Economic growth with unlimited supply of labour. *Manchester School* 22 (May): 139–91.
MATHEW, A. 1989. Industries, mines and dispossession of indigenous people: The case of Chota Nagpur *In* W. Fernandes and E.G. Thukral, eds, *Development, displacement and rehabilitation*, pp. 13–32. New Delhi. Indian Social Institute.
MEHER, R K. 1994. *Industrialization and the urban social structure: A sociological study of interrelationships between industry, ecology and society in Rourkela*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
——— 1995. Growth of urban population, informal sector economy, and the concomitant environmental problems: Case of class I towns in Orissa. *Nagarlok* 27, 2: 49–66.
———. 1999. *Development disparities in a backward region: A district level analysis*. New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation.
MISRA, S. 1958. *Rourkela: An economic survey*. Bhubaneswar: Finance Department, Government of Orissa.
PARRY, J.P. 1999 Lords of labour· Working and shirking in Bhilai. *Contributions to Indian sociology* (n s) 33, 1&2: 107–69.
REDDY, I.U.B. 1994. *Industrial development and the problem of the uprooted*. Jaipur. Rawat Publications.
RIDGEWAY, J. 1971 *The politics of ecology*. New York. Dutton.

ROLLWAGEN, J.R. 1971. Region of origin and rural-urban migration in Mexico: Some general comments and a case study of entrepreneurial migration from the west. *International migration review* 5: 277–338.

ROY BURMAN, B.K. 1968. *Social processes in the industrialisation of Rourkela*. Vol. I, Monograph series, Monograph No. 1, Part XI-E, Census of India, 1961. India: Registrar General and Census Commissioner.

SACHCHIDANANDA and B.B. MANDAL. 1985. *Industrialisation and social disorganizations: A study of tribals in Bihar*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

SALOO, H. 1973. The obsolescence of growth: Capitalism and the environmental crisis. *Review of radical political economics* 5, 3: 26–45.

SENAPATI, N. 1975. *Orissa district gazetteers: Sundargarh* Cuttack: Gazetteers Unit, Government of Orissa.

SENGUPTA, N. 1983. *Contract labour in the steel region, Rourkela*. Rourkela: Asian Workers Development Institute (mimeographed).

SHETH, N.R. 1968. *Social framework of an Indian factory*. Manchester: University Press.

URSUL, A.D., ed. 1983. *Philosophy and the ecological problems of civilization*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

VAN DER VEEN, K 1979. Urbanisation, migration, and primordial attachments. *In* S.D. Pillai and C. Baks, eds, *Winners and losers: Styles of development in an Indian region*, pp. 43–80. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

VIDYARTHI, L.P. 1970. *Socio-cultural implications of industrialisation in India: A case study of tribal Bihar*. New Delhi: Research Programme Committee, Planning Commission.

A Quarterly Journal from SAGE India

The Indian Economic and Social History Review

For nearly four decades, **The Indian Economic and Social History Review** has been a meeting ground for scholars whose concerns span diverse cultural and political themes with a bearing on social and economic history. **The Indian Economic and Social History Review** is the foremost journal devoted to the study of the social and economic history of India, and South Asia more generally. The journal publishes articles with a wider coverage, referring to other Asian countries but of interest to those working on Indian history. Articles cover India's South Asian neighbours so as to provide a comparative perspective. Issues are periodically organised around a specific theme as a special number. The journal's principal features are research articles, substantial review articles and bibliographic surveys, which also cover material available in Indian languages, as a special feature.

Recent special issues:

38:1 (2001): Exploring Intellectual Cultures in Pre-colonial and Colonial India

39:2&3 (2002): Land, Politics and Trade in South Asia, 18th–20th Centuries: Essays in Memory of Dharma Kumar

Managing Editors:
Sunil Kumar,
University of Delhi
Sanjay Subrahmanyam,
University of Oxford

Frequency: March, June, September, December

For subscription information contact the office near you:

Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd,
B-42, Panchsheel Enclave,
New Delhi 110 017, India
or email at
journalsubs@indiasage.com

Sage Publications Ltd,
6, Bonhill Street, London,
EC2A 4PU, UK or email at
subscription@ sagepub.co.uk

Sage Publications Inc.,
2455 Teller Road, Thousand
Oaks, CA 91320, USA or
email at order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications
New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

Merging 'different' sacred spaces: Enabling religious encounters through pragmatic utilisation of space?

Vineeta Sinha

This article examines the phenomenon of the 'merger' of places of worship on the island nation-state of Singapore, and raises sociological questions regarding the rationale for such sharing of space for emergent styles of religiosity. The ethnographic material comes from two such cases of merger, involving Hindu and Taoist religious traditions in Singapore. These data allow us to abstract broader issues of conceptual relevance to the understanding of religion under conditions of modernity. My argument is that the practical requirement of merger in a shared physical location creates a literal and symbolic space, as well as a context for interaction between individuals, communities and ultimately modes of religiosity. This context is both constraining and liberating at the same time, but I do not see modernity as eroding or diminishing religiosity. Rather, one observes that the formal rational, instrumental logic also facilitates innovations, inventiveness and creativity in the religious domain, producing a vastly altered religious landscape. This challenges and impels us to move beyond a reductionist choice between the secularising or the sacralising effects of modernist forces on religious practice.

I
Setting the scene

In this article[1] I examine the phenomenon of 'merger' of places of worship on the island nation-state of Singapore, and raise sociological questions regarding the rationale for such sharing of space and the implications

[1] An earlier draft of this article was presented at a workshop entitled 'Religion and Modernity' at the National University of Singapore, 17–18 May 2002.

Vineeta Sinha teaches at the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore, 11 Arts Link, Singapore.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 3 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

for emergent styles of religiosity. A principal contribution of the article is substantive and ethnographic as I detail two such cases of merger in the religious domain in Singapore. I then use these data as the basis for abstracting issues of broader conceptual relevance to the understanding of religion under conditions of modernity. Since both of these mergers are fairly recent (and in fact on-going) events, I not only have easy access through these particular cases to particular kinds of historical data, but also find myself suitably positioned to document the events and processes that accompany the negotiation of new religious identities and styles of religiosity. Embarking on such a project necessitates familiarity with the circumstances that have led to these mergers. This is a colossal task, and here I can do no more than itemise the relevant themes that must be attended to: a history of urban planning, urban development and urban renewal programmes on the island, through the colonial and post-1955 moments as well as a scrutiny of how places of worship have been affected by such programmes, including the acquisition of land, the demolition of sites of worship, and the moving of deities and religious structures to other locations. These areas have received scholarly attention from a range of disciplinary perspectives to which I defer at relevant points in the discussions that follow.

II
Singapore: A planned city?[2]

The constitution and design of Singapore, from its founding as a trading port in 1819, through colonial times to nationhood, and into the present, have been dominated by the discourse of planning. This idea of Singapore as a 'planned city' has been articulated in the vast scholarship on the subject (Lim and Motha 1979; Mera 1988; Perry et al. 1997; Turnbull 1982; Yuen 1998) which highlights the need for the appropriate planning, structuring, ordering and, thus, control of land. The early urban planning of the island was carried in the Jackson Plan of 1822,[3] which initiated '. . . the idea of developing Singapore as a planned city' (Mera 1988: 20). Scholars have in fact noted that there are continuities rather than

[2] It is not my intention to provide a detailed history of planning for Singapore. However, I introduce the subject briefly as a necessary backdrop for the kind of issues I will be detailing subsequently in this article with respect to the merger of places of worship.

[3] The Jackson Plan was prepared by Philip Jackson, a young second Lieutenant in the Bengal Artillery (Pearson 1969: 161–63, in Mera 1988) and carried Stamford Raffles' vision of the physical layout and settlement plans for Singapore.

breaks between these early beginnings and the subsequent projects to structure the physical landscape according to particular socio-economic and political priorities (Turnbull 1982: 22). It has been noted, however, that by 1927 urban growth on the island was both haphazard and chaotic (Mera 1988: 21), in the absence of official plans for urban development in the interim period.

The idea of land scarcity (meaning natural resources as well as limited physical dimensions) has also seen the state assume sole responsibility for making decisions about how available land is to be utilised, producing a situation of bureaucratic control of land use in Singapore. Thus, one response to the condition of land scarcity has been the generation of a series of short- and long-term planning strategies, development plans and zoning ordinances (Lim and Motha 1979), culminating in documents that have become indispensable for urban planning in Singapore: the Master Plan, the Concept Plan and Development Guide Plans. The years 1951–58 were crucial dates in Singapore's town planning, starting with the commissioning of a Master Plan, its preparation and approval by the government and its subsequent publication in 1958 (Mera 1988: 21). What is distinctive about this plan is its focus on physical planning 'with emphasis on the *rational use of land*' (ibid.: 22, emphasis added).[4] While the specifics have changed with time, the rationale of planning for control of the social, economic and physical aspects of land use have remained constant. The idea of planning, managing and controlling pervaded all societal domains, and some projects were pursued more aggressively than others.

While it is thus impossible, in the light of overwhelming historical and contemporary evidence, to argue against the idea of Singapore as a planned city, there is also a basis for arguing that planning for the island has been far from totalistic, universal and absolute in its reach. This is

[4] This Master Plan (MP) has been periodically re-shaped and altered, seven times in total, responding to the exigencies of specific socio-economic conditions The Concept Plan was formulated in the 1960s to deal with long-term land use and development, something that the MP was not designed to do (Perry et al. 1997), and was adopted in 1971. The Concept Plan is reviewed once in ten years Finally, Singapore is further divided into fifty-five planning areas which are guided by Development Guide Plans (DGPs). These are different in intent from the two other strategies mentioned, being concerned with specific localities and actually translating the stated intentions (The Singapore Master Plan 1998) into concrete action. It is within the logic of these DGPs that attention is focused on Places of Worship, which have to compete with other public concerns such as housing, education, leisure, industries, etc. (Perry et al. 1997).

not surprising. Over time, town planning for Singapore has selectively concentrated on specific areas of the island (such as the commercial, administrative and political centres and the residential settlements), prioritising industrial and urban development, as well as attending to the housing, health, educational and social welfare needs of the population. Still, the planning and structural ordering of the island have been uneven and fragmented. Given this scenario, one would expect to find numerous pockets of space all over the island (and the physical structures contained within) that would not have been captured in the land planning exercise. It is my view that sacred sites and religious structures in Singapore constitute one such example of locations and edifices that have escaped the administrative and bureaucratic gaze (both in the colonial and post-1955 periods).[5] By religious structures, I mean here structures which were used to house physical representations of divinity in the form of shrines, altars, temples, churches, *suraus* and mosques, located near people's homes and workplaces, along pathways and roads, under trees and along the railway tracks. Many of these had existed as 'unauthorised structures' since their inception, but their unsanctioned status was not an issue until they literally came in the way of urban development projects. I contend that these sites remained unmarked partly due to their location in outlying areas, but also because their presence was not then a 'problem'. They thus remained outside the purview of administrative and political concerns and were in fact invisible. Fortunate in having eluded the authorities, many of these religious structures (of all religious traditions) and the sites on which they were located continued to exist and grow in Singapore well into the 1960s and 1970s, until their presence became problematic. They were by this time rendered visible and their continued presence became an issue precisely because of the potential utility of the sites for alternative purposes. Fundamental to the idea of planning is the imposition of order and structure, and hence control over physical landscapes, the built environment and the populations within, as well as the practices people are engaged in. The continued existence of these sites and practices has been crucial for enabling a particular, animistic form of religiosity on the island (Wee 1989), which has clearly been negatively affected by alterations in the physical landscape of the island in more recent years.

[5] Again, this cannot be generalised. As Kong (1999) and Yeoh (2000) demonstrate for Singapore, the selective focus of the colonial authorities on private burial grounds and public cemeteries, particularly amongst the Chinese community, was a highly visible, conspicuous and politicised issue, not to mention a field of contestation.

III
Religious structures and urban renewal: Move and/or merge

In 1965, the People's Action Party (PAP) government inherited an island whose physical landscape was dotted with 'indiscriminately' marked sacred sites and religious structures (legitimate as well as unauthorised) of a variety of shapes and sizes and claimed by numerous religious traditions.[6] In the newly created nation-state of Singapore, the leaders articulated the need for embarking on development in the name of progress and modernity. The mid-1960s saw the initiation of a single-minded, aggressive approach to urban development, which was eventually visible in a variety of programmes initiated by this government. An institutional infrastructure was established to support this new mood through the formation of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and the Housing and Development Board (HDB),[7] land use planning and implementing institutions, and through the passing of the Compulsory Land Acquisition Act in 1966.

The prevailing rhetoric regarding the place of religion in a secular nation-state at the time of independence reveals a strongly pragmatic stance. Various statements by political leaders carried this piece of advice for religious communities: their religious beliefs and ideology should be

[6] The building of 'new' Hindu temples on the island from 1827 well into the 1980s provides a basis for making this argument. Various sources allow us to reconstruct the history of Hindu temples on the island (Mialaret 1969; Nilavu 1985; Rajah 1975; Sinha 1987). *We learn that the Sri Mariamman Temple was built on a piece of land granted by* the Government in 1823; the original edifice of the Veeramma Kaliamman Temple in Serangoon road was built by 'a group of Indians from Bengal' (Mialaret 1969: 40) in the 1890s; the Sivan Temple, originally located in Orchard Road 'was first used in 1821 but the first edifice in brick dates between 1850–55' (ibid.: 45); the Mariamman Temple in the Race Course at Dunearn Road 'was built in 1954 by the Singapore Turf Club employees' (ibid.); the Sri Ahsara Kesari Temple in Woodlands Road (15th milestone) was built in the mid-1960s; and the Subramaniam Temple inside the Naval Base 'was a mere shrine against a tree in 1963' for workers at the Base (ibid.: 56). We also have evidence that there were in these years shrines and altars placed under trees, on hills and along roads and railway tracks (ibid.: 56–57).

[7] The Housing and Development Board (HDB) was formed in 1960 to plan and build homes for the citizenry, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) was created in 1974 from the previously existing Urban Redevelopment Department, which was part of the HDB. In 1990, the URA was transformed into the National Planning Authority, which continued to attend to the planning, development of land and conservation of sites and locations on the island.

socially and politically relevant, and they should be ready to change or discard outmoded and backward religious attitudes; in other words, to modernise in order to facilitate material, technological progress, and to refrain from impeding the nation's economic, material and social advancement (Sinha 1999). It is also clear that religious groups are encouraged to adopt secular, materialist and worldly values (Wee 1989) which are prioritised in this discourse.

This forward-looking and progressive discourse confronts, literally/physically, the existing built environment of the city, including the myriad religious structures and marked sacred sites therein. The state's policy on land use with respect to the allocation, building, demolition and acquisition of land for religious structures has been well-documented by Kong (1993a). She notes a number of important features of state land use policy. First, urban renewal programmes that culminated in clearing parcels of land with pre-existing structures did not, and do not now, discriminate between religious and secular buildings[8] (ibid.: 29–31). The clearing of buildings and the acquisition of land[9] by the state for development have thus affected all sectors of the population, including all religious communities in Singapore.[10] Second, in the event of resettlement, the allocation of alternative sites cannot be made on a 'one to one exchange basis'. The government in fact offers land to several affected cases *jointly*, as there is simply not enough land to go around. Third, the policies of land use and land planning in Singapore reveal the principles of 'pragmatism', 'efficiency' and 'orderly growth' (ibid.). These principles form the bedrock of the state's policy on land use for religious purposes.[11]

[8] The only exceptions are made in the event that the structure/building in question has been identified by the National Heritage Society or Preservation of Monuments Board as a national monument, thereby granting it protection from demolition and relocation.

[9] The acquisition of land has led to a noticeable increase in the percentage of land owned by the State. Starting with 31 per cent state land ownership in 1949, by 1985 the percentage of land owned by the State had climbed to 76 2 per cent (Tan 1992: 53).

[10] According to a *Straits Times* article of 4 October 1987, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office reveals the following data: 'over a period of thirteen years, starting in 1974, twenty-three mosques, seventy-six *suraus* (prayer houses), 700 Chinese temples, twenty-seven Hindu temples and nineteen churches had to make way for public development'. The statement also added that 'the Government does not discriminate against any race or religion in its land acquisition policy. Compensation is paid according to provisions in the Land Acquisition Act' (*The Straits Times* 1987).

[11] That there are government policies and directives on these issues becomes apparent in *practice*, i.e., when specific edifices and the land on which they are sited are identified for redevelopment purposes. However, these policies are not coherently codified

Given such a stance, government pronouncements about land in general, and specifically land for community and religious purposes, have always highlighted its paucity as well as its immense value. Specific kinds of land use are further prioritised in this discourse. It is more pressing to secure land for the needs of housing, education, social welfare, industrial and economic growth, leisure and recreation and community events. Land-starved Singapore is a reality and citizens are implored to learn to live with this constraint. Even as recently as 1998, Lim Hng Kiang, the then Minister for National Development, declared that although Singaporeans intellectually understood and accepted the idea of land and other kinds of constraints, they had yet to accept the fact of 'land constraints' at an emotional level (Mahizhnan and Lee 1998: 33).

The theme of having to be hard-nosed and sensible about moving ahead with the times rears its head repeatedly in such official, public utterances. With regard to the loss of land which had housed places of worship, we see (*i*) the demolition of structures and their possible rebuilding on alternative sites; (*ii*) offers of appropriate compensation to some; and (*iii*) in the case of unauthorised structures, no offer of compensation. That churches, mosques and temples face the twin problems of being 'homeless' and having to be 'mobile' is a related aspect of the same discourse. The transience and impermanence of their existence is evidenced in the practice of 'moving gods' and 'moving places of worship', illustrating the ambiguities and tensions in the location of sacred spaces in a secular realm (Ho 1999). Movement is a fact of life for most places of worship given the limited leases for their landholdings.[12] Some affected parties move less willingly than others, and there are documented cases of different kinds of resistance to being moved (Wee 1989).[13] While religious freedom is enshrined in the *Constitution of Singapore*, and the

---

anywhere that I am aware of. These existing policies have to be culled, abstracted and surmised from government and ministerial statements, reported in the local media or heard during speeches delivered at various community events.

[12] A statement from the Prime Minister's Office in 1987 carries this information vis-à-vis leases for land bought for building religious structures: 'Sites for mosques were given ninety-nine year leases. Those allocated to other religious institutions were given thirty-year leases if they had been re-settled or sixty years if they were bought through public tender'; 'PMO explains policy on mosque land', *The Straits Times*, 4 October 1987, p. 19).

[13] In my own fieldwork at the Hock Huat Keng Temple, I learnt that the late Hindu priest at the temple in Yio Chu Kang between 1986 and 1998 was himself involved in at least two incidents where he resisted his Muneeswaran Temple being moved. On the

state clearly sees a place for religion in the social life of Singapore, both collectively and for individuals, there are occasions when the state is fairly firm in its dealings with religious communities, and when there exists little room for negotiation. Urban renewal programmes and the clearing and acquisition of land earmarked for development are good examples where, beyond a point, concession and compromise are non-existent. The state deals with its citizens in these cases through buffer or mediating institutions, such as the Housing Development Board, the Ministry of National Development and the Urban Redevelopment Authority, which have the administrative and legal jurisdiction to achieve the desired end-results.

The urban renewal programme, initiated in the 1960s, continues in altered forms even today, and 'new cases' have been routinely reported in the local media—the problematics surrounding the permanent location of places of worship in a secular land being a recurrent theme. One still hears of religious structures and edifices 'in search' of permanent homes, and often of their having to move into unconventional, and sometimes what are considered inappropriate, locations (for example, former cinema theatres, community centres, auditoriums, homes, commercial spaces).[14]

---

first occasion, the first Muneeswaran shrine he was associated with was affected because the Potong Pasir kampung was being cleared in 1979, and on the second, the Yio Chu Kang shrine which he was working with in 1986 had to make way for development. In both cases, I was told by his family members that he basically parked himself at the two sites and refused to move for months on end, and in one instance for two years. I could not verify these statements through other sources. Both times, I learnt that he only moved when the authorities (HDB officials, members of the police) were called in and he was in fact arrested He was only persuaded to give up the two places under pressure from the authorities. He was relieved from having to move when the shrine and the community of Muneeswaran followers found a home in Hock Huat Keng Temple at Yio Chu Kang Road sometime in 1986. Also, in a *Straits Times* article of 7 January 1978, we learn that 'The refusal of the trustees of the Tang Suahan Kiong San Soh Hoo Chu Buddhist Temple to clear out of its present site in Henderson Road is hampering development works in the area' (p. 7). In the same report, according to a Housing Board spokesman, the notice for acquiring the temple site was made in April 1973 but 'The trustees have repeatedly refused to accept offers made by the board to combine with other resettlement cases to build a new temple on sites offered by the board.'

[14] The local English daily, *The Straits Times*, is a good source for tracking these developments on the island. The City Harvest Church—a Pentecostal charismatic church, moved into the Hollywood Theatre at Tanjong Katong Road in 1995 ('Hollywood Cinema now a church', *The Straits Times*, 16 June 1995, p. 11). According to a report of 1 January 1987, 'some Protestant groups worship in homes, hotel function rooms and other buildings not normally used as places of worship' ('Churches in Singapore are making real-estate news') Many churches also cannot afford even to participate in the public

This latter often creates additional problems for the parties in question, as it pits them against other institutions (such as the HDB and the Police Force).[15] Sometimes, too, they are opposed by laypersons who complain to the authorities when homes in private housing estates and other residential areas are used as places of worship.

It is important to understand that the idea of merger or 'co-location' is not exclusively applied to religious spaces. Rather, it seems to be a generic principle adopted by the National Planning Authority in managing the issue of limited land on the island. According to a feature article in *Skyline* (a bi-monthly publication of the Urban Redevelopment Authority),

> In addressing the limited supply of land, URA encourages government agencies and service providers to *co-locate* public facilities to *maximize land use. Co-location means placing the different facilities and uses under the same roof on the same site.* It also means the buildings where the facilities are co-located are usually built to higher plot ratios to maximize the intensity of land use (*Skyline*, March/April 2000, emphasis added).

The idea of merger/co-location is thus a guiding principle which applies to all land use,[16] including places of worship. The title of the article quoted above, 'Maximum use, minimum space', captures well the essence of this logic, which is also reflected in the call for a 'multi-purpose' Hindu temple, a theme I discuss later in the article.

As mentioned earlier, the government's policy is to allocate alternative sites to several 'resettlement cases', i.e., places of worship of the *same* religious tradition. They are encouraged to make a bid and move together, hence the idea of *merger* of places of worship. Two assumptions are

---

tender system and so end up using 'rented or borrowed accommodation' (ibid.). Very often they also end up in homes ('Church under probe for using Mandai house', *The Straits Times*, 11 July 1989, p. 17), and come under scrutiny from the relevant authorities for using 'a house as a place of worship without approval' (ibid.).

[15] The authorities that are involved in the disciplining include the Ministry of National Development (*The Straits Times*, 20 July 1989, p. 23), and the Housing and Development Board ('Housing Board may evict those using flats for religious activities', *The Straits Times*, 6 May 1989, p. 23). Sometimes members of the public write in to the Forum page of the local newspaper ('"Temple/cult house" in neighbourhood', *The Straits Times*, 16 December 1988, p. 26; 'House being used as place of worship', *The Straits Times*, 1 February 1989, p. 24).

[16] One example is the housing of a library, a theatre and community club—all offering independent uses—in the new Marine Parade Community Complex.

made here: first, that the combining of spaces for worship within the same religious tradition will not be problematic (theologically speaking); and second, that this proposition of co-location is acceptable to the religious community in question. Although there were some instances of such conjoining through the 1970s and 1980s, it is clear that the idea of merger was not immediately received with open arms. My own research with Hindu temples in 1986–87 confirms this, and I use my older fieldwork data to further this discussion. At this time, the Hindu Endowments Board (HEB) was concerned with the 'problem' of too many Hindu temples on the island. According to the authorities, the desire and need for temples amongst the local Hindu community had grown dramatically in recent years. They argued that, given the physical constraints in the tight urban landscape of Singapore, finding space for so many places of worship had become a problem. Also, many of these were not 'established temples' (meaning they are financially unstable), but small shrines operated by individuals, small informal groups or families. One possible option proposed by the Board was that, instead of constructing single temples dedicated to individual deities, there should be a merger of smaller temples, provided the deities are theologically and mythologically compatible. In 1992, the call for 'merger' was made again by the then Minister of Home Affairs, Professor S. Jayakumar, to allow resources (funds and personnel) to be pooled and also to enable the smaller temples to survive into the future, given the high price of land and construction. By the 1990s, the idea of merging compatible places of worship seemed to have become the norm. There have been numerous reports in the media of different Sikh temples coming together; sometimes these are from the same area, but sometimes not. One sees the same pattern with Taoist, Buddhist and Hindu temples.[17]

The idea of merger was mooted by individual ministers and supported by the Housing and Development Board, the various institutions managing the different religions,[18] and sometimes from administrators from

[17] Mergers of places of worship are not unique to any one religious tradition but affect religious structures of the Sikh community ('Two Sikh temples merge into one in Yishun', *The Straits Times*, 28 August 1995, p. 39), the Taoist and Buddhist communities ('New $2.4m Chong Pang home for five temples', *The Straits Times*, 27 September 1993, p 25; 'One home for nine Tampines temples', *The Straits Times*, 19 December 1992, p. 25). However, I have not encountered as yet, either during fieldwork or in the existing literature, instances of the merger of churches or of mosques.

[18] The Sikh Advisory Board (SAB), the Hindu Endowments Board (HEB) and Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS), respectively.

merging places of worship. From this perspective, this was a good idea, not to mention a sensible response to a problem of scarce resources; it was an administrative solution to the problem of infinite demands and claims made on a limited and valuable resource—land. The logic at work here is clearly a pragmatic one (Chua 1985, 1995), a dominant and consistent feature of Singapore-style governance and administration, and it '. . . enables the government to rationalize, from conception to implementation, state activities on a routine basis' (Chua 1995: 57). The political history of the People's Action Party government has been read, at least rhetorically, as being shaped by an ideology of pragmatism. This ideology is not only evident in the declarations of the political elites, but has also been imbibed and acted upon by the citizenry. In calling for the location of many separate places of worship under one roof, the government was envisaging a practical and workable scenario, consistent with the maximal and optimal utilisation of land. Also, seen from the perspective of the parties that thus come together, this *potentially* provides financial stability and security, allows a pooling of resources (funds, skills and personnel), facilitates administrative management, perhaps provides strength in numbers, and accords greater power to negotiate with the relevant authorities.

IV
Sharing places of worship: Auspicious alliances or awkward associations?

What kinds of merger can theoretically occur within a multi-religious context and with what implications? Given the range and variety of religious traditions present in Singapore, countless permutations are possible in theory. But what alliances are deemed permissible and workable, and which in fact occur here in practice? At the most basic level, coalitions can occur either within the *same* religious tradition, or across two or more religious traditions. Instead of speaking in the abstract, my argument here is grounded in empirical material regarding two instances of merger in Singapore: one is the sharing of a physical location by members of Taoist and Hindu communities—the Hock Huat Keng/Veeramuthu Muneeswaran Temple (HHK/VMT); the second, the merging of three different Hindu temples under one roof—the Arulmigu Velmurugan Gnanamuneeswaran Temple (AVGMT).

The data for these two cases of merger are drawn from my own ethnographic fieldwork at these two sites. My work at the Taoist-Hindu temple

dates back to January 2001, and I have continued to be associated with the temple since then.[19] My association with the AVGMT in its present configuration is more recent—from April 2002—but I had conducted fieldwork in two of the three merged temples in 1986–87 as part of my Master's research. Participant observation was a core feature of my methodological logic as I tried to document the functioning rhythm of these religious institutions over a sustained period of time, collecting primary material through in-depth interviews with informants using a combination of English, Tamil and Malay. I participated in key events at the temples—both on a daily basis and during specific calendrical events, also doing fieldwork at these sites during quiet moments, when nothing much seemed to be happening by way of ritual and worship.[20]

The two cases on which I focus here share some common experiences with regard to the merger issue, but they also reveal distinct historical and contemporary differences, and these will be highlighted at relevant points in the article. Relatedly, the material allows us to explore the defining role of pragmatic considerations (land scarcity, limited financial, spatial and managerial resources, etc.) in creating a situation of close physical and interactional proximity between styles of religiosity, and facilitating particular kinds of encounters within and across religious traditions. To my knowledge, there has been no sociological investigation of the phenomenon of merger of places of worship in Singapore, an event produced by the administrative and pragmatic logic I have just outlined. The remainder of this article is concerned with pursuing the implications of such confluences and convergences for emergent forms of religiosity.

[19] In fact my association with both these temples goes beyond the immediate scope of this article. Since I am currently researching the worship and veneration of the deities Muneeswaran and Muniyandi in Singapore and Malaysia, I continue to do fieldwork in these two places, sometimes on a daily basis, and at others on significant ritual events. I have now established good rapport with devotees, caretakers and other personnel and my data are drawn both from formal interviews and casual conversations.

[20] For instance, I was present at and participated in *bhajan* sessions, and observed the mode in which devotees worshipped, how the priests performed the daily prayers and also prayers on special festive occasions as well as events centred around the celebration of Tua Peh Kong's birthday and on the 1st and 15th days of the Chinese lunar calendar.

V

'Chinese-Indian under one roof': Hock Huat Keng/Veeramuthu Muneeswaran Temple

My initial sociological and anthropological interest in the phenomenon of the sharing of space by different religious communities was triggered in 1998 by an account in a local English newspaper of how Taoists and Hindus co-exist under one roof ('The children of two equal faiths', *The Straits Times*, 20 April 1998). This awareness was put in reserve, so to speak, until January 2001, when I began ethnographic research at the temple.[21] The temple has featured in the media since 1998, including a recent *Straits Times* article of January 2002, where it was highlighted as an instance of inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony in multicultural Singapore. Such a reading of the temple in the public domain, which is endorsed both by members of the temple and politicians (*The Straits Times*, 24 September 1998), assumes immense political and symbolic significance particularly in the post-September 11 climate by identifying points of sharedness in a context otherwise defined by conspicuous ethnic and religious differences.

The Hock Huat Keng/Veeramuthu Muneeswaran Temple is presently located in the north of the island, on the fringes of the Yishun Housing Estate and away from the residential units that house the satellite town's population. Together with a Hindu temple and a Taoist temple, this third temple sits in the midst of Yishun Industrial Park A, defined by a complex of factories, packaging companies and a vehicle inspection centre, and not very easily accessible. Yet the location of these places of worship in this industrial and commercial setting is a phenomenon that many individuals familiar with Singapore would recognise as a case of *rojak*[22]—a pleasant mixture of rather diverse entities. Here I reconstruct the story of how Hock Huat Keng Temple has come to be located in these surroundings using material primarily from my fieldwork, particularly

[21] This research was inspired in the course of teaching a third-year module entitled 'Religion and Society in Culture' at the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore.

[22] *Rojak*: a Malay word which refers to a food item and which is a mixture of fresh fruits and vegetables with an accompanying sauce.

interviews with individuals who have been involved with managing affairs of the temple through the last two to three decades.[23]

The HHK/VM temple now occupies a space of 0.13 hectares and has two parts. The larger portion houses the Taoist temple while the smaller part is a 100 sq. ft enclosure that is recognisable as a Hindu temple. The former is itself a result of the merger of three Taoist temples,[24] dedicated to Tua Peh Kong, the three 'Hell Gods' and the 'General God', while the latter is dedicated to the Hindu, village folk-deity—Muneeswaran—but also houses within its premises other Hindu deities such as Murugan, Ganesh, Amman and Muniyandi. Through my interviews, I learnt that the alliance of the Hindu deity Muneeswaran with the Hock Huat Keng Temple is not recent, but goes back at least sixty years. The original location of the Hock Huat Keng Temple, which housed the main Taoist deity Tua Peh Kong, was Yio Chu Kang Road, Track 32, where it was a simple structure of wood, zinc and canvas. Within the temple compound was a tree, under which was placed a black statue (surmised by worshippers to be a representation of Muneeswaran). I was told by both the Taoist and Hindu sides that Chinese and Indian visitors to the temple 'in the old days' would pray both to the Hindu and the Taoist deities. When the original temple site was to be acquired by the government for redevelopment, the question of relocation surfaced and both parties expressed a desire to 'move together' as they wanted to continue this established relationship, which by then had seen the two deities brought together as 'friends' and 'brothers'. The sentiment my informants expressed was 'we have no desire to be separate' and 'we have been together so long, why change now?' I gather also that there was some concern that breaking off this alliance might bring 'bad luck' by incurring the wrath of the deities.

The temple was registered with the Registrar of Societies only in 1994, 'under enforcement' by the authorities, I was told. The temple management committee bought a piece of land (not their first choice) from the Housing and Development Board for a lease of thirty years (including the construction period of five years), starting in 1994. On the question

[23] I spoke to members of the temple's management committee, including the vice-chairman, the caretaker on the Taoist side, the 15-year-old Hindu male currently being trained as a priest, the present Hindu priest, his sister and other members of his family, and some regular devotees at the temple, both Taoists and Hindus.

[24] The three temples were located respectively in Yio Chu Kang (Teacher's Estate), Yishun and Ang Mo Kio, and came together in 1994 when the temple was officially registered and allocated land in Yishun.

of a 'Chinese-Indian' merger, I learnt from the committee members that the relevant authorities were concerned about it and wondered if this would be a permanent association or prove to be unstable. Apparently, they 'made their survey' and decided that it would be all right, especially once they were told of the history of 'Chinese-Indian' sides having been together already for many decades. The sale of the land was, however, contingent on the merger with other Taoist temples in the area, and in nearby locations similarly affected by relocation. Today, the temple is managed by a joint management committee, which has fourteen office bearers—both Chinese and Indian. It also has a band of active volunteers who look after the day-to-day running of the temple. The two religious communities share the same temple compound, operate with a common pool of funds, and partake of all other resources. According to the management committee, the temple sees devotees from the surrounding residential areas (Yishun and Yio Chu Kang). The numbers who regularly worship at the temple are estimated to be about 3,000 Taoist devotees, compared with some 750 Hindu devotees.

The regulars at the temple are well aware that they have a unique setup. The phrase 'Chinese-Indian under one roof' was a term of self-description and surfaced inevitably and regularly in my conversations. They are also conscious that this arrangement both reflects well on them as well as sets them apart: 'We are the only temple like this in Singapore', I often heard.[25] Many were quick to emphasise that their situation was not one in which different religious communities merely shared the same space, but otherwise operated separately. To substantiate this claim, they cited numerous instances which for them are evidence of deep-seated attachments, connections and 'getting along' between the two domains: Chinese Taoists praying to Muneeswaran and Indian Hindus worshipping before Taoist deities; both parties participating in Hindu and Taoist rituals; organising each other's religious festivals and helping with fund-raising events. According to Mr Jimmy Ng, vice-chairman of the Management Committee: 'As far as we are concerned, there is no majority or minority in this temple. We worship the same gods and there is no difference between us' (*The Straits Times*, 24 September 1998). Clearly these rhetorical statements about 'we are one', articulated in kinship metaphors of 'brotherhood' and 'family ties', are made against a background

[25] Technically, this is no longer true, given that there is a similar set-up in Loyang which has brought together a Hindu deity—Vinayagar—and Tua Peh Kong, a Taoist deity.

awareness of the mainstream discourses on inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony, and to a large extent reflect political correctness. However, it would be inaccurate to suggest that such statements are disingenuous, for my data reveal considerable interaction, producing unified practices across what appear, from the outside, as clearly identifiable boundaries between Taoists and Hindus.

What have been the effects of such a merger?[26] It is important to reiterate that the sort of 'merger' I am talking about here between the Hindu[27] and Taoist elements is not recent, although the context in which this long-term association continues to persist is a novel one. Clearly, in this case the effects of the 'merger' I now present are products of this stable and enduring interaction. In the following sections, where appropriate, I also provide detailed ethnographic evidence of interaction and intermingling between individuals and communities.

Naming and identity

The naming[28] of the new temple is in itself quite significant, reflecting the identities of the two religious and cultural traditions presented therein. The present name is fairly long, but the inclusion of the Hindu deity's name in the new temple signals for the Hindu members the enhanced relevance and status of their deity. This was not the case in the old premises where there was no separate, built-up structure for Muneeswaran,

[26] A holistic and comprehensive response to this question would necessarily have to include emphases on both the Hindu and Taoist sides. This is something I intend to pursue subsequently in my on-going work on this theme. However, for the purpose of this article, I discuss the effects of the merger only from the perspective of the Hindu segment of the temple. This is a limitation I acknowledge and note at the outset.

[27] It is interesting that the group of individuals who presently manage the Hindu side of the temple have themselves been associated with the Yio Chu Kang Hock Huat Keng Temple since 1986. This group is what the authorities would call a 'resettlement case', not just once but two times over: once in having to move a shrine of Muneeswaran from the Potong Pasir Kampung in 1979, and then in having to relocate their shrine from Yio Chu Kang. I attend to the details of this move in another article, 'A new god in the diaspora: Persistence and innovations in Muneeswaran-Muniyandi worship in Singaporean Hinduism', which was presented at the Indian Sociological Association Conference in Kanpur, 18–20 December 2002.

[28] The new names of both the temples under discussion in this article were the focus of some amusing commentary. People I talked with joked that one effect of merging temples is that the names are too long, citing as evidence the names of their temples. This is indeed the case with many of the other combined and joint temples.

whose statue occupied a space under a tree within the temple grounds. Interestingly, throughout my fieldwork at this temple, the naming of the complex was never a contentious or divisive issue. For example, I did not hear debates about what the name of the temple should be or which deity's name should come first, or complaints that Muneeswaran was marginalised as a result of being named second. If anything, I heard instead that the inclusion of Muneeswaran in the temple's official, registered name signals that the deity has been accorded greater space, legitimacy and attention in the new set-up. This is rather different from the second case of merger, as we will shortly see.

Bridging Taoism and Hinduism

Religions are conspicuously ethnicised in everyday consciousness in the multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious context of Singapore, both in official and popular discourse. Taoism is seen as a 'Chinese' religion, whereas Hinduism is viewed as an 'Indian' religion.[29] Benjamin (1987) argues that both traditions share a common mode of orientation, and certainly, at least as they are practised in Singapore, both Taoism and Hinduism display features that are highly diffused, polytheistic, folk and animistic, in addition to being defined by an immanent mode of orientation which is essentially non-interfering. However, in the multicultural context of Singapore, where religious identity is conjoined with talk of racial, ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities, this association is received with some surprise and declared to be a novelty both by the participants

[29] It is significant that here 'Taoism' and 'Hinduism' are both terms of self-description as well as categories used in the Singapore Census of Population to capture the religious composition of the population. Other categories include 'Christianity', 'Buddhism', 'Islam', 'Other Religions' and 'No Religion' (*Singapore Census of Population*, Advance Data Release No. 2, 2000, Table 1, p. 1). Ethnographically, 'Taoism' and 'Hinduism' are recognised by practitioners to be different on the basis of having originated from China and India respectively. Beyond this, practitioners point to similarities rather than differences between the two religious traditions. The one difference that was articulated from the Hindu side was the Taoist practice of meat offerings (including pork) to specific deities within the temple. This could possibly be one arena where one could see limits to 'merger', especially if, in future, the Hindu side wished to elevate the status of the principal Hindu deity by completely stopping the occasional practice of meat offerings to Muniyandi within the temple premises. The Hindu leaders at this temple are quite aware that meat offerings in the form of animal sacrifices, even to folk deities, are frowned upon by the larger Hindu community in Singapore.

and the larger public. In this context, where religions are 'race-d' (Purushotam 1998), Malay-ness and Muslim-ness are seen to always go together; Indian-ness and Hindu-ness are conflated; while Chinese-ness may have several religious identities—Taoist, Buddhist and Christian. Hence, the sharing of a common space is seen to be new, even for the members of the concerned communities, and to facilitate a bridging of the ethnic and religious distinctions otherwise recognised as natural and normal in Singaporean social life.

Building kinship and genealogy

Being in such close proximity for at least six decades has allowed the forging of specific kinds of ties not only between members of the two religious communities, but between the two deities—Tua Peh Kong and Muneeswaran. It has further generated a language for speaking of the two deities in strikingly similar terms. They are even brought together through a kinship relationship—as 'brothers'. I often heard it said that the two were really not different but simply versions of each other. They are certainly believed to share a friendship, and my data show that this amity extends to their devotees as well. Additionally, both deities are perceived as 'father figures', or as 'grandfatherly', sharing specific paternal qualities—i.e., being kind, forgiving, caring and responsible. This declared similarity in their demeanor, personality, taste and powers allows both sets of devotees to claim, 'we pray to the same god'.

Converging and parallel modes of worship

Being housed in the same premises has produced an interactional dynamics leading to the adoption of common ritual practices by members of both communities. This interaction is evident first in the manner of worshipping the deities at the temple. For example, when Taoists approach the Hindu deity Muneeswaran, they pray to him in two modes: first, in terms of what would be stereotypically recognised as appropriate 'Hindu' postures, felicitations and gestures (i.e., bringing the palms together in a gesture of respect and lying prostrate on the ground before the deity, accepting *aarati* and *prasad* from the priest with the right hand and applying *vibhuti* and *kumkum* on the forehead); and second, as in worship of the Taoist deity Tua Peh Kong (i.e., waving tall, lit joss-sticks in a

sweeping motion before the deity and lodging these in the large Chinese-style urns placed before the Muneeswaran altar). Similarly, when Hindus approach the Taoist deities, they follow the mode of approach to Hindu deities; but they have also learnt to pray like the Taoists. According to one Hindu committee member, these habits are the outcome of instructions to both sets of devotees on 'how they should pray and what they should and should not do' before the respective deities:

> There is no priest on the Taoist side. So we teach the Indian side how to pray to the Chinese side. How to kneel on the stool and offer, how to stand and burn joss sticks, how to burn paper, how to offer oranges . . . but can't go up to deities, just like Hindus. That's our job.

Apart from the overlapping styles of worship, another dimension of intermingling is the use of ritual objects across Taoist-Hindu boundaries. It is perhaps jarring for newcomers to find Chinese-style urns, joss-sticks and incense, oranges, pineapples, an oil container with floating candles and a bottle with 4-Digit[30] numbers (items typically found in a Taoist temple) also placed permanently before the image of Muneeswaran, co-existing with the ritual paraphernalia commonly found in Hindu temples. In terms of offerings, Taoist devotees sometimes offer packets of chicken briyani to Muniyandi,[31] as they would to some Taoist deities. This is permissible and allowed by the Hindu side, given that Muniyandi (who I was told by the Hindus at this temple, is different from Muneeswaran) is seen as a 'non-vegetarian' deity/god (this description in English being used by my informants), whereas Muneeswaran[32] is a 'vegetarian god'.

[30] 4-Digit refers to a lottery system, where a combination of four numbers brings monetary returns; it is very popular amongst all communities in Singapore.

[31] According to the Hindu caretakers, their response to this practice is one of co-operation and acceptance. They say, 'after all it is their wish. We can't stop them. It won't be nice'. In any case, offerings of meat to Muneeswaran and Muniyandi, both folk deities, are not a problem. In fact, once a year, on the third day after the festival of Taipucam, the slaughter of chickens still takes place on the Hindu side of the temple These deities are also offered alcohol (beer), cigars and cheroots.

[32] Muneeswaran is said to be an incarnation of Lord Siva. He is popularly worshipped as a village deity in South India, particularly Tamil Nadu, where as far as I could ascertain he is not worshipped in the homes of devotees. He is thought to be a fierce deity and a warrior god, and an 'unclean' one. Muniyandi is a minor deity who is firmly located in the 'little tradition' (Rajah 1975: 127). The deity is said to be meat-eating and blood-consuming, and theoretically is never to be placed at the home altar. Interestingly, the HHK/VMT had reproduced pictures of the deity Muneeswaran and these are sold to

At the same time, since the protector deity Muniyandi is believed to favour beer and cigars, the Taoist devotees offer these to him, while Hindu devotees offer oranges and pineapples to Tua Peh Kong and to Muneeswaran.

At the community level, the two groups routinely come together to organise and celebrate the various ritual events of the Hindu and Taoist calendars. For example, the first and 15th days of the Chinese month are auspicious dates for the Taoists. On this day Taoist devotees offer special prayers before the Taoist deities *as well as* to the deity Muneeswaran. Also, the Hindu priest conducts special prayers for Hindu deities on these days even though these dates are not ritually significant for the Hindus. The same scenario is enacted on Tua Peh Kong's birthday, another important date for the Taoists. Other examples are further illustrative: it is common for Taoists to participate in the carrying of *pal kudam* and *kavatis*[33] and to participate in *bhajan* singing sessions on 1 January, a date that has become important for the Hindus at the temple; during *ubbayyams* (procession of Hindu gods around the temple), the chariot first makes a ritual stop before the Tua Peh Kong altar in the Taoist part of the temple before proceeding on its rounds.

Further evidence of intermingling is manifest in the architectural details of the roof and surrounding walls of the main sanctum of the deity Muneeswaran—seen in the liberal and prominent use of the dragon and bamboo motifs in green ceramic, co-existing with supporting pillars on which the *trishul* (trident) is inscribed. The dragon is a common and popular motif in Taoist Temple architecture and sculpture and its presence in the main enclosure of a Hindu deity is quite striking. A final example is the inclusion of a small statue of the Taoist Monkey God in the same enclosure as the deities Muneeswaran, Murugan, Ganesh and Amman. Similarly, the Taoist deity is adorned with a jasmine and rose garland like the other deities and the Hindu priest in his round of prayers makes no distinction in his approach to the Monkey God and the Hindu deities—

---

devotees, presumably to be placed at the home altar, another novel feature of religious worship at this temple.

[33] The carrying of *pal kudam* (Tamil, milk pot) and *kavati* (Tamil, 'a decorated pole of wood with an arch over it' [Diehl 1956: 223]) from one location to another is a common feature of village Hinduism in Tamil Nadu. In the Singapore context, these are associated with such as festivals as Taipucam and Pangui Utturam. At the HHK temple, 1 January has become an auspicious day and on this day devotees carry *pal kudam* and *kavati* in a procession around the temple.

offering a camphor flame, water, food and flowers to him in exactly the same mode.

Innovative styles of religious worship

As already mentioned, this Hindu-Taoist alliance and the absence of conflict and tensions are considered innovative by the wider Singaporean public. However, this Muneeswaran Temple of the Hock Huat Keng Temple has at best only a marginal presence in the wider Singaporean Hindu context. The local Hindu authorities know about the temple but have no explicit interaction with it. In a conversation with one such party, the response was 'we know they are there . . . we don't deal with them but we also don't disturb them . . . but we also don't interfere with them'. One reason cited for this distance was precisely the association of the Hindu temple with a 'Chinese temple'. The argument was that 'in a Chinese temple, they serve meat and especially pork and we feel that as Hindus it is not appropriate for us to have our gods there . . .'. No doubt Hindu authorities would also object to the slaughter of chickens for Muniyandi, or the offering of chicken briyani and dried fish. On its part, the Muneeswaran Temple had invited the Hindu Endowment Board to its consecration ceremony in April 1998, but I learnt from the Hindu group at HHK/VMT that no one attended the ceremony, leading one of the members to conclude '. . . they (HEB) don't want to have anything to do with us'. While the temple receives support from a few Hindu temples[34] on the island, it does not interact with many of them. The support from individuals who are also Muneeswaran devotees is, however, considerable.

This unique merger of Taoist and Hindu elements seems, then, to signal both a point of distinction for the larger Singaporean public, and the marginalisation of the Hindu part of the alliance from the Hindu mainstream. But such marginality also liberates and, as seen in the range of new rituals, modes of worship, iconography and terminology,[35] allows a

[34] These include the Holy Tree Subramaniam Temple, Queenstown Muneeswaran Temple and the Spottiswoode Park Temple. Sometimes they provide religious specialists and musicians for ceremonies and send their *bhajan* groups to the Hock Huat Keng Temple when invited there.

[35] Some interesting innovations include the following: the declaration of 1 January as a day for honouring Muneeswaran who, being a folk deity, has no textual or theological basis and thus no festivals or days dedicated to him. On this day, devotees carry milk pots and *kavatis*, in effect following the same procedures as are observed for Taipucam, including the bathing of the deity in milk as a way of renewing personal vows; the

space for innovation and invention. In other words, while the temple is on the one hand seen to be breaking with specific traditions, it is at the same time also fashioning a different set of practices that might eventually become institutionalised as 'tradition'.

With these observations, I move now to address the second case of merger which, as mentioned previously, shares some generic themes with the Taoist-Hindu case but also stands on its own.

VI
'A joint abode'[36]: Arulmigu Velmurugan Gnanamuneeswaran Temple (AVGMT)

This AVGMT temple is presently located temporarily at the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple Compound in Serangoon Road, and brings together under one roof deities and devotees from three Hindu temples that, in the not so distant past, existed as separate and distinct entities. These were the Velmurugan Temple (Silat Road), the Sri Mariamman Muneeswaran Temple (Lorong Kesum, Jalan Kayu) and the Sri Krishna Bhagvan Durgadevi Temple (Lorong Kesum, Jalan Kayu), where the latter two were neighbours. My association with this makeshift place of worship in this form is more recent, but the first two of the three temples are temples where I did fieldwork in 1986 and 1987 in the course of my master's research. Since the original sites of these two temples have been physically transformed, the primary data I collected more than fifteen years ago now assume historical importance.

As will become clear, this second case of merger, while sharing some common features with the Taoist-Hindu case, also raises some rather different additional points for sociological reflection. It is noteworthy that this case involves the coming together of three Hindu temples, that is, merger within the *same* religious tradition. Yet, as we will see, the sharing of space in one religious tradition does not signify the absence of antagonism and contestation. Rather, we see that negotiating the

observation of Father's day, according to the Gregorian calendar, to honour Muneeswaran the father figure; the rather unconventional portrayal of Muneeswaran with four arms, etc.

[36] The phrase 'joint abode' is the title of a publication prepared for the Dinner and Dance organised to raise funds for the temple building fund. I thought it a very apt description, given the thematic and problematics being raised in the context of the present article.

process of merger reveals internal fissures and arenas of dispute. Since this merger has yet to be fully achieved, my fieldwork data convey the ambiguities and uncertainties of this transient and temporary state.

But first, an account of the conditions under which these three different places of worship have merged: as is to be expected, the story of the merger of these three different places of worship echoes the tales of many other sacred sites that have been similarly forced to seek alternative locations either independently or, more likely, together with other 'resettlement cases' affected by the government's urban development and urban renewal programmes.

A *Straits Times* article of 24 January 1994 ('Hindu temples merge to build shrines on new sites'), reports that thirteen Hindu temples would merge to form four new temples, one of which would include the three temples named above, together with a fourth—the Sri Rama Bhakta Hanuman Temple[37] (Bukit Timah Avenue). In my discussions with the concerned parties relating to the merger, I gathered that the fourth temple had decided to part ways for reasons my informants could not or would not reveal to me. I was told that the temples in question had not received any compensation because they were all 'unauthorised structures'. The new merged temple had originally been offered a piece of land in Ang Mo Kio, but this was rejected as there was a sewer running beneath it, making it an unsuitable site for a place of worship. An alternative site had been successfully tendered for at the cost of S$ 2 million for a land size of 20,000 sq. ft. Though this new and 'permanent' location (the lease is valid for thirty years) is in one of the newer satellite towns, Sengkang Housing Estate, which is still not easily accessible by public transport, it has a catchment of devotees from the surrounding residential areas. The site is considered substantial, but accessibility is considered a problem and I heard complaints about 'it is too far' and 'difficult to get to'. The land has been paid for but the protem committee of the new temple and the Hindu Endowment Board are working very hard to raise funds for the building project, requiring an estimated additional S$ 3 million. The ground piling and groundbreaking ceremonies have already taken place and construction is expected to begin soon. For this purpose sculptors and artisans from South India will be brought to Singapore. The new

[37] As far as I know, this temple has moved out from its old location and into a shop house in Rifle Range Road. I have been to the site several times in an effort to contact them, but have always found the doors shut and cannot tell if the temple is still functioning.

temple is expected to be ready by the year 2005, when the big move is set to occur.

In the meantime, operating out of the Perumal Temple grounds, the AVGMT is managed by a protem committee comprising members of the Endowment and Advisory boards and representatives of the three merging temples. It is lauded as a 'Hindu religious landmark'[38] in the new Sengkang Housing Estate. According to Ms Penny Low, Member of Parliament for the Pasir Ris-Punggol Group Representative Committee:

> The new Hindu temple will find comfort in the company of other Chinese temples[39] that now stand on the stretch of road. Together, these temples will enhance the multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious vibrancy of the community and its surroundings . . . . (It) will add a new landmark to Singapore's religious landscape and strength the social fabric with its efforts to promote social and cultural cohesion. (*Dinner and Dance Publication*, 16 March 2002, p. 3)

The AVGMT moved into the Perumal temple grounds in March 2000. At the moment it has two Brahmin priests, two temple musicians, one temple assistant, one temple cook and one temple manager—all of them from India. It appears that the old staff and personnel of the three temples have not continued in the new establishment, although representatives from their community of devotees are included in the Management Committee.

The issue of merger here is different from the HHK/VMT case discussed previously in three respects: first, this merger involves temples from within what is regarded as the same religious tradition (i.e., Hinduism), whereas the former merger straddles two different religious traditions which, in the racialised/ethnicised Singapore context are seen to be very different. Second, the AVGMT merger involves the unification of three formerly separate, independent entities, whereas in the former

[38] It is also lauded as having achieved a number of 'firsts' in Singapore: the first Hindu temple to bring together three different Hindu temples under one roof; the first Hindu temple to be built in the new millennium; and the first temple to have an architectural style that will integrate with the concept of Sengkang New Town (*Dinner and Dance Publication*, 16 March 2002).

[39] It is not surprising that the Hindu temple is located alongside two other Chinese temples, one of which happens to also have been located at Jalan Kayu The other two temples are· Sengkang Joint Temple (Chong Ghee Temple and Kampong Tengah Thian Hou Keng Temple) and Chong Hua Tong Tou Teck Hwee Taiwanese Chinese Temple.

there was already a lengthy association between Hindu and Taoist elements under one roof. Third, this merger is more recent; in fact it has yet to be fully realised. The AVGMT case is particularly exciting precisely for the reason that it is an instance of a merger coming into being, allowing one to watch the process at work. So what does a sociological gaze reveal vis-à-vis the process of negotiating a merger?

In my conversations with various informants (religious and ritual specialists as well as administrators at the temple) I raised questions about the process of merger under way, including any 'problems' in such conjoining. Expectedly, the responses I received from all quarters did not openly articulate any difficulties, except those relating to scarcity of funding and other necessary resources and the need to launch a strong drive to raise sufficient money to build the temple. With time, however, some areas of concern were expressed, though not presented as insurmountable problems. In any case, I was told these difficulties had already been resolved through 'compromise' and 'adjustment', given the specific conditions in Singapore that had created the need for a merger in the first place.

Naming, identity and presiding deity/deities

Interestingly, we revisit the theme of naming the new temple. The name was decided upon collectively, and reflects the primary significance accorded to two deities: Velmurugan (belonging to the Saivite[40] tradition) and Gnanamuneeswaran. Muneeswaran is a village folk deity, but the version selected here distances the deity from such origins. When I asked why the other deities (such as Mariamman, Durga and Krishna—deities named in two of the three original temples) were not included in the new name, I was told, perhaps facetiously, that the name is already too long and unwieldy. On the other hand, according to one of my informants, who quoted the scriptures, a temple must have only one 'presiding' deity (who may or may not be the principal deity) who must be located facing east. The positioning of other deities is determined thereafter, and in relation to the presiding deity. In this instance, who is to be the presiding deity? What factors would determine this choice and who would make this choice? Would there be more than one presiding deity? When I raised these queries with informants, I received a variety of replies. One said

[40] Saivism is the name given to the teachings and practices of devotees of Lord Siva, one of the Hindu trinity. A Saivite is thus a follower of Lord Siva.

that there was some dispute over this and no agreement had yet been made, adding 'you know with Indians, we can't agree amongst ourselves'. Another referred to the name of the temple and said that there would be no problem with having two presiding deities—Murugan and Muneeswaran—and that 'two doorways (entrances to two sanctum sanctorum) were being built for them at the new temple', to which, however, a third informant added that it was impossible to have more than one presiding deity in a Hindu temple. Only time will tell what decisions will ultimately be made, but in any case the choice of a presiding deity or deities and of an appropriate name for the temple do appear to be points of contention, and are related to the issues of maintaining a distinct identity and legitimate status in the new and future setup.

Conjoining 'disparate' strands within Hinduism

The naming issue has the potential to become even more protracted and convoluted once one recognises that the deities from the three temples belong to different strands within Hinduism, some of which are deemed incompatible with others. The deities Mariamman and Muneeswaran are village-based folk deities and stand outside the textual, scriptural, Sanskritic, Brahmanic tradition of Saivism and Vaisnavism—to which Murugan and Krishna belong respectively. Although the conjoining of 'Murugan' and 'Muneeswaran'—a Sanskritic and a village folk deity respectively, may be a radical idea theologically and theoretically, it does occur in practice and is by no means unique to 'Singaporean Hinduism'.[41] Here, the deity Muneeswaran has been detached from his folk

[41] Space does not permit me to elaborate on this phrase in too much detail. I first used the description 'Singaporean Hinduism', in my Master's thesis of 1987 to denote a particular configuration of elements that constitute what is recognised as 'Hinduism' on this island. My argument is, first of all, that 'Singaporean Hinduism' is a constructed category, and while it may share a likeness with constructions of Hinduism in other similar settings such as Malaysia, or even parts of Tamil Nadu, India, the substantive content of the category is the outcome of a number of specific forces working together, some emanating from within Singapore society and others impacting from the outside. Second, the category must be historicised to the extent that its features have changed over time. For example, today the festivals Taipucam and Timiti are embraced as definitive features of Hinduism in Singapore, while in the 1930s and 1940s, the same were viewed by many Hindus themselves as barbaric and superstitious events, and calls were made for banning them on the island. Some internal factors that shape the category are the fact of Singapore's multi-ethnicity and multi-religiosity, the minority status of Hinduism here, the numerical dominance of a strongly evangelical Christian community, the sociological profile of the migrant Indian Hindu community, the self-perception of Hinduism

origins through a series of moves: first, he has been named and titled—*Gnana*muneeswaran,[42] the prefix *gnana* meaning 'wisdom' or 'knowledge'; second, this title serves to distinguish him from other versions of the same deity, for example, Dharma Muneeswaran—popularly known as the 'warrior god'; third, this deity is perceived to be a likeness of the deity Siva—'Siva Swaroopam'; and fourth, he is—in the language of some of my informants from the HHK/VMT—a 'soft' god or a 'vegetarian' god,[43] who does not want to be appeased by alcohol, blood, meat or cigars. Thus, the co-existence of these deities within one location sees folk Hinduism and Sanskritic Hinduism brought into close contact, but with the concomitant erasure of the folk variety in the new arrangement through the transformation of Muneeswaran and Mariamman into Siva and Devi respectively.

Emerging modes of worship

The Brahmin priest (who is from India and on contract) I spoke to at the new temple observed that, in his experience and to his knowledge, few large and separate temples were dedicated to the deity Muneeswaran in cities across Tamil Nadu, India, and that the construction of shrines and temples in honour of Muneeswaran was not an urban phenomenon. According to him, it only occurred 'in the villages', adding that the deity is prominent in the countryside and amongst 'simple people'. However, although a Brahmin himself, he said that he had no problems conducting prayers for folk deities such as Mariamman and Muneeswaran. In the old premises at Lorong Kesum, the deities were attended to by a *pandaram*.[44] As to how he conducted prayers for them, his response was that

as a tolerant, non-aggressive and non-proselytising religion, the depoliticisation of the religious domain in Singapore, and the view that Hindus here are different from those in India, etc.

[42] The idol of Muneeswaran that is present in the new temple is from the Lorong Kesum Mariamman Muneeswaran Temple, where he was placed next to the deity Muthu Mariamman. During my fieldwork in 1986 with the priest of the temple, I do not recall the name 'Gnanamuneeswaran' ever being used to describe this deity, or to distinguish it from other versions of Muneeswaran—such as Dharma Muneeswaran.

[43] During my fieldwork at the Mariamman Muneeswaran Temple in 1986, I had documented the practice of making offerings of chicken and pigeons. This practice, revealed to me by the then priest of the temple, clearly does not occur in the new premises and the new set-up.

[44] Religious specialists in local Hindu temples are either Brahmin priests or non-Brahmin priests. Of the latter, I have only encountered priests belonging to the Pandaram

for the former he used 'the same prayers as [for] Devi' and for the latter 'the same prayer as [for] Siva', since they were likenesses of Devi and Siva respectively. He also added that since all the food at the temple is 'vegetarian', there is really no distinction to be made between folk deities and Sanskritic deities, and seemed surprised when I told him that at one of the three temples that had merged, animal sacrifices did occur in the mid-1980s. He claimed that he had no difficulty attending to any of the deities, though he had not learnt in any text how, specifically, to ritually attend to Muneeswaran. He also alluded to the fact that Singapore, being modern and urban, threw up challenges of different kinds and that 'adjustments' were necessary[45] here in order to move with the times.

A multi-purpose temple?

The merger of Hindu temples is also premised on the logic that pooling resources will allow temples to refashion themselves and serve more than the spiritual needs of the local Hindu community. According to the then Minster for Home Affairs and Law, Professor S. Jayakumar, if temples do not do more than this 'they will be nothing other than monuments and symbols of Hindu tradition' (*The Straits Times*, 23 February 1992, p. 16). Some of the other areas temples are encouraged to focus on include the social, educational and welfare needs of the community, reflecting a certain notion of what a 'real and useful' temple should be. On the other hand, there are parties who feel that the idea of a 'multi-purpose' temple, one that facilitates within its premises worldly activities and priorities (such as education, childcare, social welfare) detracts from the spirituality, efficacy and sanctity of a Hindu temple which is not merely a sacred site but also an abode of god, i.e., a *devalya* or *kovil*. From the point of view of the authorities, however, the logic seems to be that temples that are exclusively 'places of worship' are somehow incomplete or irrelevant to contemporary conditions and to the multifaceted

---

jati, who have been traditionally associated with the performance of ritual duties as assistants to *kurukkals* (a *jati* of Brahmin priests) in south Indian temples (Rajah 1975: 82). The Tamil Lexicon describes *pandaram* as: (*i*) religious mendicants; (*ii*) Saiva monk; (*iii*) caste of non-Brahmin Saivites who sell garlands of flowers. The word refers in practice to a caste grouping as well as a profession (see Diehl 1956: 181).

[45] Added to this is the fact that he is, after all, a paid employee of the temple and is here on a contract basis. It is reasonable to wonder if he would have given the same responses had he had the freedom to refuse specific practices and expectations.

needs of Hindus in Singapore, and do not allow optimal use of these religious institutions. Here we revisit the pragmatic logic alluded to earlier.

In this second case, merger involves an additional factor beyond issues of land scarcity and urban renewal programmes, that is, the question of how many Hindu temples are needed for a community of this size. The HEB has listed and counted twenty-three established and recognised temples, and it deems these sufficient for the small size of the local Hindu community[46] (*Chitrabaanu Hindu Festivals*, 2002–3). More problematic are the smaller, less established shrines, sometimes managed and operated by families and sometimes by groups of individuals. The call for merger really affects and applies to these latter types of probably 'unauthorised structures' that would not be successful in surviving the relocation exercise, having neither the means to pay for the cost of alternative land, nor for the building and maintenance of a new temple. In such an eventuality, the affected shrines would either perish or would have to combine with bigger and more stable establishments to ensure their chances of survival. Certainly, the family-run Mariamman Muneeswaran Temple at Lorong Kesum might have disappeared were it not for pooling its resources with the other two temples it has now merged with.

The affected parties can and do see the wisdom in this logic of co-location. Yet, they do also wonder if the merger exercise is really aimed at squeezing out the 'smaller players' by raising the stakes. Are the government, the authorities and the various ministers and politicians who comment on this subject sending a message that there is no room for informal, itinerant, roadside shrines and altars? Sociologically then, crucial queries surface: is the 'merge or perish' logic eliminating the space for particular religious styles and modes of worship in the religious landscape of Singapore? Is the emergent legitimate religious practice one that is 'highly sanitised', orderly, rule-governed, and lacking in the chaos, disorder and spontaneity of the disappearing modes of worship? In this context Wee's (1989) argument and insight about the disappearance of animistic forms of religiosity in the Singapore landscape is highly pertinent and revealing.[47]

[46] According to the Singapore Census of Population 2000, the Hindu community numbered 99,904 in the year 2000. This compares with 77,789 Hindus listed in the Census of 1990 and 58,917 Hindus in the 1980 Census (*Singapore Census of Population*, Advance Data Release No. 2, 2000, p. 1). While the absolute numbers have increased, only up to 4 per cent of the total Singapore population is recorded as Hindu in 2000 (ibid.).

[47] Animism is a worldview that sees various manifestations of the inanimate landscape infused with spirit. In religious contexts, this means that dimensions of the physical

VII
Making sense of religions in modern times: What are the possibilities?

The relation of religion and modernity is a theme that lies at the heart of the classical tradition in sociology (Durkheim 1912; Marx 1848; Marx and Engels 1957/58; Weber 1904), and it is one that continues to engage generations of social scientists. Although it is beyond the scope of the present article to comment on the vast scholarship on this subject, I conclude with some reflections on the interplay of religion and modernity in the light of the ethnographic data on the 'merger' of places of worship in the nation-state of Singapore that I have presented above.

The state machinery in Singapore is responsible for the administration of the religious domain through specific institutions and organisations. As we have already seen, a pragmatic and administrative logic is the dominant guiding principle for the governance and management of social life on the island. It is possible to argue that such a make-up implies specific kinds of state control of the religious domain and its organisation, leading not only to its circumscription but also its de-politicisation (Kong 1993a; Sinha 1999). The question of how to appropriately and comfortably locate sacred spaces and sites in a secular landscape—politically and physically—poses certain challenges to both sides. For all the evidence pointing to the state having a strong and upper hand in dealing with religious communities, it clearly does not wish to antagonise them, maintaining that religion has a legitimate place in the social and political life of Singaporeans. With regard to the provision of space for places of worship, the government has repeatedly reassured the citizenry that it will

---

environment such as trees, hills, rocks, particular physical spots and locations, are invested with divinity. Evidence of this continues to abound in Singapore although, as Wee (1989) notes, it is now dramatically different as compared to the pre-1970s scene. Many notions and interpretations of why certain spots are sacrosanct have to do with the strong image people have of a sense of place and the legends, myths and folklore associated with them. According to a *Straits Times* article of 19 August 1989 ('Roadside Gods'), one still came across altars and shrines in grassy patches and fields, under trees, and alongside of various roads and lanes. The author concludes thus: 'Whether to draw divine favour or to ward off evil, roadside altars have become permanent fixtures in the Singapore landscape. They show that beneath the veneer of modernization visible in Singapore, there are, perhaps, still many who are villagers at heart.' While I disagree with the latter part of the statement, the ethnographic observation about roadside altars remains a highly valid one.

ensure that adequate land will be made available (particularly in the satellite new towns) to the extent possible. But it is also clear that religious communities do not receive any special treatment or favours in this regard (Kong 1993b). Instead they have to abide by the rules of the market in securing parcels of land, and at market prices, for their religious edifices.

Given this fact of secular, pragmatic, bureaucratic and administrative control over the religious domain, what can be said about the religious landscape on the island? Can such domination be interpreted as being oppressively coercive and as eliminating choices for religious communities, for example? My data suggest that this line of reasoning would be highly reductionist and simplistic; instead my ethnographic work recommends a different reading. The particular configuration of the sociopolitical conditions and discourses on the island seems rather to inspire *novel solutions and adaptations*, both on the part of the planners and the affected parties. This is clearly borne out by the data from the two temples. Although 'mergers' and syncretisms across religious traditions are neither surprising nor unique to Singapore, and can and do occur spontaneously, I propose that the mergers we have witnessed here are distinctive in some respects. The idea of 'mergers' of places of worship is offered here as an *administrative and bureaucratic solution* to a series of practical problems, such as land scarcity, inadequate funds and other resources, and management difficulties. Therein lies its novelty and ingenuity. Similarly, the affected parties have a choice to either accept this proposition of merger or reject it. Many exercise instrumental logic in accepting the suggestions for merger. They, too, are then engaged in a process of figuring out how to cope with the newness of the situation and in negotiating transformed statuses and identities.

Administrative directives and policies produce a situation of close physical proximity between religious groups, which inadvertently and certainly unintentionally generates engagement amongst varied religious practices, beliefs and orientations. These religious encounters entail embarking on a process of consultation, negotiation and adjustment amongst the parties, which may involve conflicts, compromises or consensus. In the case of the Taoist-Hindu merger, this process has culminated in allowing the relative peaceful co-existence of two religious traditions under one roof while simultaneously marginalising the Hindus here from the mainstream Hindu community. But this distance and alienation have *also* allowed the former to imagine and devise novel practices and modes of thinking, which have already, in a very short time, produced completely *new styles of religiosity*. In the second case, the merging of the three

Hindu temples has already partly erased the earlier distinctive religious styles of at least one of the temples, potentially generating some discomfort and dissatisfaction, though I suspect that the rough edges would eventually be ironed out, precisely for pragmatic reasons. Although all three temples are 'Hindu' and belong to the *same* religion, there seem to be more areas of discord that need attention. In view of the proximity of this 'new' temple to local Hindu authorities, it would be interesting to see if, over time, this new institution adopts the standard form and features (a blueprint of sorts, itself the product of a bureaucratic and administrative logic) of other existing legitimate and established Hindu temples in Singapore. Given the broader organisation of social and political life on the island, it is inevitable that there will be an embeddedness of its sacred domains (including its physical sites) within a rational framework.

The phenomenon of mergers and co-location is particularly interesting sociologically in the multi-religious context of Singapore. What would be the implications of such co-location of sacred spaces across and within religious communities in a religiously plural environment? Questions that come to mind immediately include these: which religious traditions could co-locate and merge? and on the basis of what criteria—doctrinal, theological compatibility or pragmatic logic? Which religious traditions would never come together, why, and under which historical conditions? One can see Taoist and Hindu elements coming together in Singapore at this point in time. Would this happen in China or India or even in Singapore in a different time period? Would it be possible for, say, Hindu and Christian, or Christian and Muslim elements to be combined and how would this work itself out in practice? Given my reading of the Singaporean scene, I cannot see these latter religious traditions[48] coming together at this point in time, to share a common sacred space. Another crucial issue would be: who would decide which religious traditions should merge? Would this be up to bureaucrats, religious leaders or laypersons? In the instances of merger outlined in this article, there is clearly

[48] It would be simplistic to state in the abstract that the sort of associations under discussion could not occur with respect to specific religious traditions. However, particular slices of data from concrete socio-political settings would enable us to make a studied guess about what sort of religious traditions could realistically speaking co-locate in practice. On the basis of my reading of the religious scene in Singapore at this point in time, my sense is that the kind of mergers I have documented would not *at present* easily and unproblematically occur across monotheistic religious traditions such as Islam, Christianity and Judaism in Singapore. This by no means suggests that such mergers are not theoretically or in practice possible with respect to monotheistic religious traditions or between polytheistic and monotheistic traditions.

no element of coercion. Rather, the decision-making is more complex, involving a balancing act between pragmatic and theological considerations for all parties. Even if one is discussing mergers within the same religious tradition (as in the case of Hinduism), one can ask: what would be the limits of co-location and how far would the different strands within a religious community be willing to make compromises? For example, the temple dedicated to a Sanskritic deity could refuse to be co-located with a folk, non-Sanskritic deity, or vice versa. Or perhaps the followers of Muneeswaran might insist on adhering to a particular style of religiosity (say in offering meat, blood, alcohol and cigars to the deity). Both of these would make it impossible for the mergers to occur. This exercise would also go a long way towards articulating what are seen to be the core, defining, essential elements of religious traditions, which would not be negotiable and which could not be compromised, and those elements in religion which would be malleable and amenable to changes. Admittedly my data have allowed me to raise more questions than answers with respect to the sociological significance of mergers. Yet, it also demonstrates that the sharing of space for worship (within or across religious traditions) does facilitate particular kinds of religious encounters and has the potential to produce novel religious thinking and practices.

So how does one conceive the relation of the secular and the sacred in this context? Existing formulations posit that modernist forces have variously affected the status and location of religion in society. While 'secularisation theory' (which is by no means unified and homogeneous itself) has been the dominant position (Berger 1969; Hammond 1985; Jameson 1991; Martin 1990; Weber 1904; Wilson 1982, 1996; Yamane 1997), voices asserting 'the return of the sacred' have been getting louder (Casanova 1994; Haynes 1998; Heelas 1996; Luckmann 1990; Warner 1993). Ultimately, these debates can be resolved only through specific slices of ethnographic data, but the complexity of the field I have encountered in Singapore certainly demands that one move beyond the dichotomous choice of sacralisation versus secularisation. Given the bureaucratic control of land use here, I contend that we witness what I would call 'enforced sacralisation' of profane spaces and an erasure of spontaneity in the *production* and construction of sacred spaces (cf. Kong 2001). The designation of land for building religious structures is rooted in a logic that operates outside theological and textual prescriptions for selecting appropriate and spiritually efficacious spaces (Kong 1992, 1993a). While the discourse on this-worldly progress is accepted by religious communities when they pragmatically accept a designated piece

HEELAS, PAUL. 1996. *The New Age movement. The celebration of the self and the secularization of modernity* Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.

HINDU ENDOWMENTS BOARD. 2002. *Chitrbanu Hindu Festivals*. Singapore: Hindu Endowments Board.

HO, SERENA HWEE HUA. 1999. In search of permanent homes: Christian Churches and cultural politics of space. Unpublished Academic Exercise, Department of Geography, National University of Singapore.

JAMESON, FREDERIC. 1991. *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of Late Capitalism*. London & New York: Verso.

KONG, LILY. 1992. The sacred and the secular: Exploring contemporary meanings and values for religious buildings in Singapore. *Southeast Asian journal of social science* 20, 1: 18–42.

———. 1993a. Environment and planning. *D: Society and Space* 11, 1: 23–45.

———. 1993b. Negotiating conceptions of sacred space: A case study of religious buildings in Singapore. *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* 18: 342–58.

———. 1999. Cemeteries and columbaria, memorials and mausoleums: Narrative and interpretation in the study of deathscapes in geography. *Australian geographical studies* 37: 1–10.

———. 2001. Mapping 'new' geographies of religion: Politics and poetics in modernity. *Progress in human geography* 25, 2: 211–33.

LAMBERT, YVES. 1999. Religion in modernity as a new axial age: Secularisation or new religious forms? *Sociology of religion* 60, 3: 303–33.

LIM, WILLIAM S.W. and PHILIP MOTHA. 1979. *Land policy in Singapore*. Singapore: DP Architects.

LUCKMANN, THOMAS. 1990. Shrinking transcendence, expanding religion? *Sociological analysis* 50, 2: 127–38.

MAHIZHNAN, ARUN and LEE TSAO YUAN, eds. 1998. *Singapore. Re-engineering success*. Institute of Policy Studies, Singapore: Oxford University Press.

MARTIN, DAVID. 1990. *Tongues of fire. The explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Oxford & Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell.

MARX, KARL. 1848 [1977]. The Communist manifesto. *In* David McLellan, ed., *Karl Marx. Selected writings*, pp. 20–48. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MARX, KARL and FREDERICH ENGELS. 1958. *Karl Marx and F. Engels on religion*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

MASTER PLAN. 1998. Republic of Singapore, Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority.

MERA, MICHAEL MADAN. 1988. Urban planning in Singapore: An assessment of official plans. Unpublished Academic Exercise. Department of Geography, National University of Singapore.

MIALARET, JEAN-PIERRE. 1969 *Hinduism in Singapore: A guide to the temples in Singapore*. Singapore: Donald Moore.

NILAVU, MOHD. ALI. 1985. Hindu mother-goddess worship in modern Singapore: An ethnographic study. Unpublished Academic Exercise, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore.

PERRY, MARTIN, LILY KONG and BRENDA YEOH. 1997. *Singapore: A developmental city state*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

PURUSHOTAM, NIRMALA SRIREKAM. 1998. *Negotiating language, constructing race: Disciplining difference in Singapore*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

RAJAH, ANANDA. 1975. The ecological study of shrines. Unpublished Academic Exercise, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore.

SINGAPORE CENSUS OF POPULATION, 2000. *Advance Data Release No. 2, Religion*. Singapore: Singapore National Printers.

SINHA, VINEETA. 1987. Hinduism in Singapore: A sociological and ethnographic perspective. M.Soc.Sci Thesis, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore

———. 1999. Constituting and re-constituting the religious domain in the modern nation-state of Singapore. *In* Kwok Kian Woon, Lily Kong, Kwa Chong Guan and Brenda Yeoh, eds, *Our place in time: Exploring heritage and memory in Singapore*, pp. 76–95. Singapore: Singapore Heritage Society.

TAN, HUNG BOON. 1992. Singapore's land use policy 1959–1990. Unpublished Academic Exercise, Department of Economics and Statistics, National University of Singapore.

TONG, CHEE KIONG and LILY KONG. 2000. Religion and modernity: Ritual transformations and reconstruction of space and time. *Social and cultural geography* 1, 1: 29–44.

TURNBULL, C.M. 1982. *A history of Singapore 1819–1975*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

WARNER, STEPHEN R. 1993. Work in progress toward a new paradigm for the sociological study of religion in the United States. *American journal of sociology* 98, 5: 1044–93.

WEBER, MAX. 1904 [1985]. *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of Capitalism*. London: Unwin.

WEE, VIVIENNE. 1989. Secular state, multi-religious society: The patterning of religion in Singapore. Unpublished Manuscript.

WILSON, BRYAN. 1976. *Contemporary transformations of religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 1982. *Religion in sociological perspective*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 1996. *Religion in a secular society. A sociological comment*. London: CA Watts.

WOODHEAD, LINDA and PAUL HEELAS, eds. 2000. *Religion in modern times. An interpretive anthology*. Oxford. Blackwell Publishers.

YAMANE, DAVID. 1997. Secularization on trial: In defense of a non-secularization paradigm. *Journal for the scientific study of religion* 36, 1: 109–22.

YEOH, BRENDA. 2000. Historical geographies of the colonized world. *In* Brian Graham and Catherine Nash, eds, *Modern historical geographies*, pp. 146–66. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

YUEN, BELINDA, ed. 1998. *Planning Singapore: From plan to implementation*. Singapore: Singapore Institute of Planners.

Newspapers

THE STRAITS TIMES, Singapore. Various articles, 1966–2002.

Culture and political agency: Gender, kinship and village politics in West Bengal

Sirpa Tenhunen

This article demonstrates the importance of heeding the local meanings of politics for an understanding of political processes and agency, rather than subsuming alliance patterns under the general heading of 'factions'. The article, which is based on ethnographic fieldwork in a village in West Bengal, India, during 1999–2000, explores the symbolic construction of politics. The main thrust of this article is to show how the domain of politics relates to the cultural construction of gender and kinship, and how this particular configuration of the concept of politics informs local political agency. It is the linkage between the domains of politics and kinship which makes parties efficient, but also makes politics a vulnerable and conflict-ridden business which allows national party organisations to intervene and consolidate their power through family disputes. In contrast to the view that portrays women as marginal to rural politics, gender is shown to be crucial to the political construction as a whole. As the concept of politics does not exclude home, kinship, and the women's domain, the gendered understanding of politics not only limits, but also enables, women's political participation and political action.

Sirpa Tenhunen is at the Social and Cultural Anthropology Unit of the Department of Sociology, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 59, 00014, Finland.

Acknowledgements: The research on which this article is based was funded by the Finnish Academy as project number 42968 and, from 2002, as project number 54485. I presented one of the first drafts of this article at the seminar, 'Gender, hierarchies and social dynamics in India', at the University of Helsinki in 2001. I wish to thank Lina Fruzzetti, the commentator on the papers, as well as the audience, for their comments. I also thank the reviewers of the article manuscript for their valuable suggestions.

Contributions to Indian sociology (n.s.) 37, 3 (2003)
SAGE Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London

This article discusses the cultural construction of politics in Janta, a village in West Bengal, India.[1] The main thrust of the article is to show how the domain of politics relates to the cultural construction of gender and kinship, and how this particular configuration of the concept of politics informs local political agency. During my stay in Janta, the Tilis, the largest caste group of the village, changed their affiliation from the Left Front to the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, the right wing Hindu nationalist party), and much of my data and observations focus on political conflicts and competition between the rival parties. In focusing not only on the symbolic concepts of politics but also on their enactment in daily life and conflict situations, my study goes beyond those studies which have described the symbolic construction of politics in static terms. Finally I will examine the significance of the cultural understanding of politics on the conceptualisation of political processes.

The article is based on seven months' fieldwork during 1999–2000 in Janta, a village with 1,928 inhabitants in the Bankura district of the state of West Bengal. Janta is multi-caste village with the majority of the villagers earning their livelihood from paddy cultivation and vegetable farming. A few high caste (Tili and Brahmin) men and one Tili woman have office jobs outside Janta. The dominant caste both numerically and in terms of land ownership are the Tilis (39 per cent). Other major caste groups are the Bauls (14 per cent), Bagdis (11 per cent) and Casas (11 per cent). Most Tilis and Casas own land, and most Bagdis and Bauls earn their livelihood through daily labour—either agricultural work or work in the tile factories.

I lived in the Tili neighbourhood where most of the political incidents I observed took place, but also regularly visited other neighbourhoods. I interviewed the local party leaders, of whom three belonged to the CPI(M) (Communist Party of India, Marxist), which is the largest party of the ruling Left Front coalition government in West Bengal, and three to the

[1] I do not use a pseudonym for the village. In the region it is generally known that anthropologists have worked in Janta so that, even had I used a pseudonym, people from the surrounding areas, for whom village identity matters, would in any case recognise the village concerned. I chose Janta as my field site after Lina Fruzzetti and Akos Ostór, who had previously carried out fieldwork in Janta, suggested this. Their film *Seed and earth*, which depicts Janta, has been shown to the villagers. The latter also possess copies of the film. Since the film was favourably received in the village and the villagers are proud of being presented to the outside world, concealing the village name did not seem to lie in their interests. I use pseudonyms for the villagers whom I interviewed and to whom I promised confidentiality. Exceptions have been made in the case of party representatives and activists who spoke to me as office holders.

BJP (one Baul, one Bagdi, one Casa, three Tilis). Two CPI(M) activists whom I interviewed were low caste and one belonged to the Tili caste. I learned about the women's political activities through interviews with five women who had participated in political organisations: two had represented the village in the panchayat (village council) and the rest had been active in the local women's committee. In addition, I had discussions with three women from the district level organisation of the women's committee and visited the local area office of the CPI(M). The bulk of the material for my ongoing research project consists of seventy-six taped interviews with villagers, during which we also discussed their understanding of and involvement in politics. Since the main focus of my ongoing research project is on women, most (sixty-seven) of those interviewed were women. I carried out the interviews in Bengali and arrived at my interview sample through an interpretative saturation process, moving to a new caste neighbourhood when interviews no longer elicited new information.

My seven months' stay in the village proved to be a period of unusual political turmoil, forcing me to pay attention to the social dynamics, as well as the cultural meanings, of politics. I will begin by sharing a few experiences of how politics, gender and kinship are enmeshed in the village in order to highlight the cultural meanings of local politics and elaborate on my research questions.

One morning during the first week of my fieldwork, everybody I came across seemed shocked. A man from the neighbourhood had been stabbed in the night and later died of his injuries. The women told me what had happened and mentioned that the stabbing had been about *rajniti* (politics). The elder brother of my host family, however, remarked that the stabbing had occurred while two brothers were fighting about land: the victim and the murder suspect were cousins, and the latter's family had been criticised for having received more than their legal share of the joint property. I wanted to learn the truth about the murder and could not help but notice that the two explanations seemed irritatingly irreconcilable.

Another political incident occurred when a Bagdi (low caste) villager, who was also a Communist Party supporter, made a dubious comment about me ('I wonder if her skin is soft'), a comment which the villagers regarded as a serious insult and a threat to my honour. What made the situation especially critical was that I was living with a Tili (higher caste) family in a neighbourhood which had recently changed its political affiliation from the CPI(M) to the BJP. The following day, the local BJP

expressed its uneasiness about the situation and, allegedly to protect me, forbade me to enter the Bagdi neighbourhood.

Such incidents illustrate how villagers do not understand politics as being separate from private homes, questions of honour, caste and kinship. My experiences are in line with the anthropological stream of the past few decades (such as Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Rogers 1975; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974; Strathern 1988; Yanagisako 1979), which has questioned the classification of power and politics as public phenomena. The pioneers of political anthropology, Evans-Pritchard (1940) and Fortes (1945), had explicitly dichotomised the domestic and the politico-juridical domains. The same dichotomy is implicit in a later definition of politics as public, goal-oriented activity (Swartz et al. 1966: 7; Swartz 1969: 1). But, drawing from Foucault, a large body of scholarly work has emphasised that notions of power and politics are cultural categories that are negotiated and contested in everyday life. It is not within the scope of this article to discuss these insights in detail. Here I will merely point out that the propagation of social life as a political field of power struggles leaves us unable to answer three questions: (*i*) what is understood as 'political' in local settings? (*ii*) to what extent does people's everyday agency draw from their understanding of power and politics? and, more particularly, (*iii*) what should one make of the political conflicts in the West Bengal village where I conducted my fieldwork?

A number of works on the symbolic construction of politics (for instance, Davis 1983; Dumont 1970; Geertz 1980; Kapferer 1988; Östör 1984) have considerably broadened our understanding of politics by questioning the universal applicability of the Western separation of politics, religion and economy. Yet these stimulating works have paid little or no attention to how the settings conventionally regarded as non-political, such as the home and the women's domain, relate to the political domain, and how the conceptualisation of politics as 'gendered' contributes to women's role in politics.[2] Neither have scholars of rural India,

[2] Geertz (1980) and Dumont (1970) ignore the question of political agency. Östör (1984: 186) points to the need to examine and reconsider preconceived Western notions of the relationship between politics and family. Davis (1983), proceeding from a general definition of politics as actions through which individuals, families and castes aim to improve their rank in the hierarchical order, includes the analysis of incidents of family life in his analysis of the political culture of a West Bengal village. Kapferer (1988) elaborates on the parallel meanings of rituals and political riots in Sri Lanka, focusing more on the interpretation of rituals that on the actual riots, or on the rioters' motivations, interests and perceptions of politics.

who have long noted the importance of quarrels, rivalries and disputes over honour, paid much attention to the implications of these events for understanding the gendered nature of politics.

This article considers how gender and kinship relate to the local concept of politics and how this understanding of politics influences, in particular, women's political agency. I will first examine gender and politics as part of the larger symbolic whole, and then relate questions of gender and women's political activities to the local, cultural understanding of politics. My approach is similar to that of Hansen (1999) whose study of Hindu nationalism also focused on the cultural dimensions of political practices. However, unlike Hansen, my ethnographic examples do not focus on public culture but on gender, kinship and the domestic sphere.

I
Local government

As Östör (1984) argues, the modernisation of the system of local governance and the introduction of the market have induced changes in rural Bengal, but they have not led to the Western-type separation of politics, religion and the economy. Nevertheless, I will start by examining the system of local governance as a crucial part of the political sphere.

The present system of local government in rural West Bengal is the product of many administrative changes, the most recent of which was the reservation of panchayat seats for women and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in 1993. Panchayats are the main units of the state-run system of local governance, first introduced in India in 1959. In 1978, West Bengal was the first state in India to implement panchayati elections through universal adult franchise when the Left Front applied the West Bengal Panchayat Act of 1973 (Lieten 1992: 99–100).

Janta belongs to the joint panchayat of three adjacent villages. The main role of the panchayat is to handle the allocation of public money for development purposes. Janta has received money through the panchayat for the building of tube wells, a school and an *atsala* (a roofed meeting place), as well as for road improvements. The panchayat also provides loans and otherwise helps the landless poor by distributing money, seeds and land. All requests for panchayat benefits must go through the two village representatives.

Pre-British India was ruled by local rajas and various intermediaries between the raja and the peasant tillers of the soil whom the emperor had rewarded with zamindari holdings for life. The British East India

Company's Permanent Settlement policy changed the economic and social structure of Bengal by turning land into the private property of the zamindars, ignoring the previous relationships between the tiller, intermediaries of various kinds and the state (Cohn and Berreman 1971: 80). The measures taken by the Company raja ruined the Malla kings of Bengal and created a state of disarray among the rajas and their immediate land grantees, as well as among the actual cultivators (Östör 1984:167). Although the Permanent Settlement terms did not make landlords responsible for local government, in practice the British Indian Government left the maintenance of village law and order to the landlords who had the power to hire the village watchmen (Mukhopadhay 1994: 26). The abolition of the zamindari system after India's independence deprived headmen of some of their power, but village ethnographies offer evidence of the village headmen's continued power in the newly-independent India. For instance, Nicholas (1998) describes how, in the early 1960s, the head of a village in West Bengal was able to control a panchayat election, appoint all the panchayat members and select himself for the highest position.

A wealthy Tili family, the Kundus, enjoyed great authority in Janta for most of the 20th century. They once owned fifty-six acres of land, which the father of the present male head of the family had received in return for services rendered and favours done for a zamindar. Mr Kundu's father, elder brother, he himself, and his daughter have all represented the village in the local governing bodies. Mr Kundu says of his father, 'If my father said one word, the whole village responded. They knew he was the big man (*boro babu*). If somebody dared to stand up against my father, the whole village would beat that person. That is why the village is now so well developed. Everybody listened to him.' One can sense that he is lamenting the loss of the family's position of power even more than the loss of the family wealth. He now owns 4 acres of land. The previous local election had been the first since India's independence in which no member of the family had been a candidate. Janta no longer has a single village leader.

After the introduction of quotas for the low castes and women, the panchayat representatives of Janta are now, as they were following the two previous elections, a Tili woman and a lower caste, Baul, man. During my stay in the village, the panchayat representatives maintained a low profile, while the most powerful people in village disputes were the local party leaders from wealthy families. The major faction in Janta is headed by one of the largest landowners in the village who is also a CPI(M)

leader. Many of the village disputes were about attempts to compete with and protest against him. The power of political parties and their leaders in the village is such that it is said to be impossible to live in the village without the patronage of one of the rival parties. The power and influence of party leaders and political parties are based on their ability to solve village disputes. I was told that anyone who felt they had suffered an injustice could call a village meeting, considered a normal part of village life, during which a solution would be negotiated among the rival parties. Women do not participate by speaking in 'meetings' (the English word is used here); they are merely allowed to stand apart and listen.

In practice, there were more rumours and talk about possible meetings than actual meetings. Disputes were not settled at meetings; instead they led to fights and to rival party supporters destroying each other's property. In cases where no mutually agreeable solution can be reached at village meetings and between local party leaders, the dispute is taken to court. However, the villagers do not have much trust in legal procedures; the police are suspected of being corrupt and inefficient, with many incidents exemplifying police inefficiency. For instance, police once came to the village wanting to take men suspected of destroying the rival party's property to the police station for interrogation. The villagers said that they would only surrender the two men on condition that two policemen remained in the village's custody. The police were not willing to have their men taken hostage by the village. Unable to assert their authority, the police car left empty. Again, in one of the nearby villages, the villagers protested police ineptitude by destroying the police station.

The political turmoil in the village was not considered a normal state of affairs. The Tili women from my neighbourhood repeatedly told me that earlier everyone had been united 'as one'. The 'oneness' refers to the Left Front's extended rule, not only in Janta, but also throughout the entire state of West Bengal since 1977. After the Left Front consolidated its power in West Bengal, many landowners had shifted from opposing the Left Front to supporting it. Indeed, the whole village of Janta, including the great landowners, middle peasants, and landless labourers, supports the Left Front through two of its constituent parties, the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the CPI(M). While this situation is the result of landowners gradually realising that joining the movement could be more advantageous than resisting it, according to Ruud (1994) the unusual alliance of labourers and landowners in West Bengal also has its roots in a conscious strategy of the Left Front which, when coming to power,

took care to minimise opposition by ensuring that it did not antagonise all landlords.

Since the 1990s, collective anger at the CPI(M) rule has arisen all over the state, resulting in the rise of two opposition parties: Trinamul (an opposition group under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee that split away from the Congress Party); and the BJP (the right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party, which runs the central government). Although the CPI(M) rule had by no means meant an absence of conflict in West Bengal or in Janta, the growth of the opposition has led to a massive new wave of political turmoil and violence in the state. In order to delineate the social context of political conflict in Janta, I will first briefly examine the social change that the past decade has brought to the village.[3]

II
Social dynamics in the village

The most prominent recent change in Janta village has been the acceleration of economic growth during the 1990s, paralleling the unprecedented growth in agricultural output in the state of West Bengal from the 1980s (Gazdar and Sengupta 1999). Both the small farmers and agricultural labourers of Janta describe the past decade's *unnoti* (development) as having brought an end to occasional food scarcity and hunger.

The major programmes of the Left Front reform—an increase in the redistribution of land held over the legal limit[4] and the securing of sharecroppers' tenancy rights—have so far benefited only a small portion of the landless in Janta. Of the twenty-four Bagdi families I interviewed, only five had been given land, each less than 1 *bigha* (0.3 acre). Only one of the twenty-four Bagdi families earned their livelihood from sharecropping. The great majority of the landless have yet to receive their share, as the government lacks land for distribution. In a West Bengal village studied by Lieten (1992: 43), the Scheduled Caste families (49.7 per cent of the population) owned only 7.5 per cent of the land after the implementation of the land reform. As Gazdar and Sengupta (1999) note,

[3] I here acknowledge the limitations of my study, which is a case study of a single village. However, it is not within the scope of this article to assess the many aspects of large-scale social processes in West Bengal as reported, for instance, in Basu (2001), Bhattacharyya (1999), Gazdar and Sengupta (1999), Lieten (1992) and Mallick (1993).

[4] Any landless household or one owning less than 3 *bighas* (1 acre) of land is considered eligible to receive 0.5–3 *bighas* (0.16–1 acre) of land. However, the plots given are usually only 0.5 *bigha*, and not large enough to support even a small family.

citing Bhaumik's (1993) examination of National Sample Survey data: 3 per cent of the cropped area of West Bengal was redistributed during the land reform, while the proportion of land under share tenancy at the time of the reform (Operation Barga) was approximately 7 per cent.

One could suppose, as Basu (2001) does, that the disillusioned landless would form the backbone of the new opposition to the Left Front. However, despite the limitations of the land reform, the landless low castes were not among the first to join the opposition to the Left Front in Janta. On the contrary, at present they are the backbone of support for the Left Front in the village and speak about a remarkable improvement in the position of their caste.

Left Front rule has decreased the dependency of the landless on landowners. As Ruud (1994) argues, despite the limitations of the land reform, the landless experience the Left Front and the CPI(M) as far more just and potent patrons than the older patrons. The landless participate in and are given new recognition in the Left Front. In Janta, the concrete benefits for those who still do not possess land include loans to start small businesses, assistance from the panchayat for widows and elderly people, as well as for people unable to work, and a small maternity benefit. All the same, the landless villagers' experience of Left Front rule would probably have been much less favourable were it not for the general growth in the agricultural production sector to which new irrigation methods, the decrease in fertiliser prices in relation to the price of rice, and the adoption of new, high-yielding rice have all contributed. Since the 1990s, the adoption of privately owned mobile pump-sets has made it possible for even the small farmers in Janta to cultivate irrigated crops. State subsidies for kerosene, fertilisers and pesticides have contributed substantially to the farmers' profits (although the Indian government is committed to reducing these subsidies following its acceptance of the treaties emerging from the Uruguay Round negotiations). Thanks to the increase in the volume of agriculture, which has so far not led to widespread mechanisation, landless labourers now have more employment opportunities on farms in comparison to previous decades. The number of industrial jobs has increased as well. Newly-prosperous small farmers are replacing their mud houses with brick houses, and this has led to the growth of the brick industry in the region.

While the past decade has brought some improvement to all strata of the village, it has also increased differentials in living standards. Those who own land, especially the Tilis, speak of a greater improvement in the standard of living than do the landless workers. The landless low

castes have witnessed the greatest strides in development in higher-caste neighbourhoods, and the position of low-caste labourers has improved, though less than the landowners. The Tili neighbourhood is the only part of the village where electric lights, fans, televisions and motorcycles have become common items during the past five years. After the implementation of the land ceiling laws, there are no longer large landlords in Janta. However, many smaller landowners have been able to purchase more land, especially families with more sons than daughters, since land is often given as part of a dowry or can be purchased with dowry payments. The wealth gap among the Tili farmers has narrowed. In the village, the strongest backing for the rise of the new opposition party, BJP, has been the upper-caste new entrepreneurs (shop keepers, a chicken farmer, men running transportation businesses) and the newly prosperous middle peasants[5] who are challenging the power of the elite families in the village.

I will now turn to the villagers' understanding of politics and a discussion of how the rival parties deploy the concept of politics at a time when state policies and new agricultural methods have contributed both to the increase in resources and the dispersal of power in the village.

III
Politics as morality

Two aspects of the local understanding of politics provide a clue as to how, in the village, the meaning of politics transcends the usual definition of politics as public, goal-oriented work: (*i*) parties are expected to get involved in the family affairs of their supporters when necessary; and (*ii*) party work is judged according to moral principles. The understanding of politics as morality is in line with the literal meaning of *rajniti* (politics), which is a compound word consisting of the words *raj* (king, ruler, state or government) and *niti* (morality, principle).

What is common to all activists, both of the CPI(M) and BJP, is the understanding of good morality as the maintenance of just relationships,

[5] I define as marginal those landowners who own less than 5 *bighas* (1.66 acres) and as small those who own 5–9 *bighas*. I base the cut-off point between the small and marginal on the fact that, according to villagers, 4–5 *bighas* of land is required for supporting a household of four to five persons. Consequently, all marginal farmers as well as small farmers with large households are compelled to supplement their income from farming with wage labour I classify as middle farmers those who own 10–20 *bighas* and those owning more than 20 *bighas* as large landowners. In my sample (N = 44) of landowners, 43 per cent were marginal, 34 per cent small, 13 per cent middle and 9 per cent large.

or in other words, mutually supportive relationships between the party and its supporters. Party members are supposed to show solidarity with one another and people expect help and support from the party. When there are irreconcilable disputes in a family, the family members can call on party leaders to settle the matter. Parties, for instance, try to curb men's drinking and gambling, settle divorce cases, and intervene in fights between husbands and wives, or between in-laws and daughters-in-law. The party organisation is a hierarchical system, much like a family, and the top level leadership of the local party organisation are expected to act as patrons to their followers. Since most party leaders and activists come from the wealthy families, politics entails 'little people' (*chotto lok*) seeking the help and patronage provided by important men ('big people', *boro lok*).[6]

Despite their shared emphasis on politics as a moral activity, and on the patronage relationship, the CPI(M) and BJP activists understand their patron position differently and set different priorities and goals for development. In addition to contesting the important men who support the CPI(M) by focusing on malpractice in disputes, BJP supporters share an agenda to develop communication systems: to provide the village with electricity, working phone connections, and better roads. On the other hand, the CPI(M) leaders and supporters expect from the party broad social reform to uplift landless labourers: for instance, the local CPI(M) leader, who belongs to the Tili caste, mentioned the need for a pension system, and a Bagdi activist spoke about demands for the improvement of housing conditions and for keeping minimum wages on par with the rising cost of living.

IV
Party kinship

The criticism of the current opposition parties against the ruling party is very similar to that which the CPI(M) activists once had against the Congress: the ruling party is accused of ruling by force and of exploiting its position for selfish ends. The CPI(M) activists' reaction to the

[6] As Ostör (1984: 134, 138) shows, the patron–client relationship derives its meaning from the broader symbolic universe. The patron–client relationship follows the structure of the *puja* (worship, religious celebration). the relationship in history and myth of the sacrificer with the deity, or the Raja and his subject. Hierarchy is expressed differently in different contexts, and the constructions of the person in different relationships link the domains, allowing them to participate in one another.

escalating opposition throughout the state of West Bengal has been to try to subdue the opposition through sheer violence. In Janta, too, CPI(M) activists have attacked and beaten BJP supporters in order to scare villagers away from the BJP. Compelling obedience has been a common behavioural pattern of village heads and zamindars, and is not rare within families either: elder brothers, husbands and mothers-in-law can simply beat family members to make them obey. However, beatings are only rarely admitted to in public, and often the use of force does not subdue but rather feeds the spirit of resistance.

While coercion is one form of the enactment of power, though not the most prominent, widely accepted or particularly effective means, calling one's political rivals selfish is an effective accusation to which people can easily relate. The same accusation is regularly heard in joint families where a family member, a man or woman who does less work than the others, is strongly criticised. A man who does not contribute his earnings to the joint family is similarly criticised. There is no justification for men to indulge in private expenses; this either leads to disciplinary action, or sows the seeds of the joint family's dispersal into nuclear households.

Political discourse parallels that of kinship morality, and the political parties' demand for justice means that the parties are expected to act in accordance with kinship ideals. Changes in political affiliation and fissions among party members are equated with serious insults and outright breaches of kinship solidarity. A woman whose honour was insulted by a local CPI(M) leader demanded that the party punish the offender for 'insulting a party brother's wife'. Since the party did not take action, she transferred her support to the BJP in a public announcement and forbade her husband to go to CPI(M) meetings—and he obeyed. The stabbing incident mentioned earlier was labelled political because it involved the kinship ties of the local CPI(M) leader. As mentioned before, the two men, the victim and the murder suspect, were first cousins and the suspect's natal family had been criticised for having received more than their legal share of the joint property. Both men supported the Left Front, and the victim's wife had been elected to the panchayat as the Left Front's representative. The suspect, the wealthiest man of the village and a CPI(M) leader, had stabbed his party and 'cousin brother'. While the victim's family was devastated, the rival political 'family' saw its opportunity. The BJP held a public meeting in the village after which almost the entire Tili neighbourhood changed its affiliation from the CPI(M) to the BJP. Even the victim's wife, who officially represents the Left Front in the panchayat, was now said to represent the BJP 'in her heart'.

The closest Bengali word for a relative is *attio* (a person with whom one shares something) (see Fruzzetti and Östör 1976), and incidents such as the above illustrate how party members are also understood to be relatives, albeit differentiated from relatives defined on the basis of indigenous ideas of blood relation, code of conduct and sentiment. Kinship ties mean certain inherent expectations of solidarity, and serious disagreements can lead to the splitting of the joint family, or the termination of interaction among certain kin. Since party members are party brothers, conflicts are inevitable, as they are between blood-related brothers. As an informant stated, 'Big parties, like large families, do not stay together.' Brothers should not fight, but they do, and this explains the political factionalism in the village.

Although political relatives resemble other types of relatives in a moral sense, there are also crucial differences. Party membership is, after all, less arbitrary than kinship: one cannot select new blood relatives or *kutum*, relatives through marriage, as one can change one's political affiliation—especially now that a viable opposition to the ruling party has emerged after decades of Left Front rule. Party membership also crosses caste, although cross-caste alliances are understood through patron–client behaviour rather than through mere kinship. Low-caste informants evaluated their party affiliations in terms of the party's abilities to help, whereas the upper castes focused on disputes about honour and kinship obligations.

Political kinship draws on the idioms of kinship, but is not coterminous with other forms of kinship and may create conflicting solidarities. When I mentioned that the communist parties in Eastern Europe had faced resistance from the people when they had tried to suppress religion and deny people their right to practice religion, the villagers drew an analogy with the Left Front's attempts to deny party members their relationship with in-laws (*kutum*) who do not support the Left Front. The BJP activist in the village emphasised that his party, unlike the CPI(M), would allow people to maintain their *somporko* (relationships). However, when I asked the BJP supporter how he related to his brother who supports the CPI(M), he replied that he had told his brother that they could be on good terms, but that if the brother got into trouble he could not be of help.

It is the overlap between party membership and kinship which allows parties to be efficient, but also makes politics a vulnerable and conflict-ridden business. National party organisations intervene and consolidate their power through expanding and aggravating local family disputes not only by mobilising their supporters from outside the village, but also

by arming them with bombs and guns. According to its cultural definition, local politics in Janta is burdened by conflicting loyalties and unanticipated connections between the local and national. No wonder most villagers also characterise politics as trouble (*gondogol*).

V
The gender of politics

Other violent incidents in the village were also related to party rivalry. The local BJP supporters decided to put an end to their harassment and intimidation by the CPI(M) supporters and attacked the CPI(M) leaders who had gathered for a meeting. CPI(M) supporters were able to send word and call for help, and a special police riot unit came to the village to pick up the suspects. BJP leaders called on the Tili women to help and the women responded to their call: 'If the village is on fire, should we not help to put out the fire?', the women later asked in explanation. The women surrounded the police cars the whole day, effectively preventing the police from picking up the suspects from the village. Later the women told me how difficult it had been to combine the daylong siege with cooking.

In the course of the siege, the women insulted the policemen. In response to one comment a policeman hit a woman with his baton. By that time the head of police at Bankura had arrived on the scene, reprimanding the policeman who had hit the woman and thanking the villagers for keeping calm. The women thereafter cooked and served tea to the police who then left—without having arrested the suspected rioters.

The women's activism was related to the men's activities, but the women acted independently and separately. While the men beat their opponents and then stayed in the background, the women moved into the limelight to resist the police. Similarly, the CPI(M) party, which organises women into *mohila samitis* (women's committees), encourages a separate pattern of action for women. Women are not excluded from politics, but participate separately from men. This sexual division parallels the symbolic structure of Bengali Hindu marriage rituals, described by Fruzzetti (1990). She shows that studying women in the context of *their own* activities yields a woman's world in its own right. Acknowledgement of the women's domain is necessary for understanding Bengali culture for the reason that 'women are neither cut off from nor equal to men in the society as a whole. [W]omen are both encompassed by and complementary to men in the concept of the person, the constitution of lines

and houses, the meanings of relationships, among relatives, the construction of caste-kinship groups, the indigenous understanding of hierarchy, and the idea of male/female relatedness' (ibid.: 133). Family disputes, along with women's demands, are readily understood as political, because politics in Bengal is not perceived in opposition to the women's domain of household and kinship, as has been the case in western societies. *Rajniti* (politics) is the domain of the ruler's morality, guided by the interrelated meanings of gender, kinship, the patron–client relationships.

Although the Bengali concept of politics does not exclude women, anthropological studies report women's invisibility in rural politics in West Bengal. These studies (for instance, Davis 1983; Nicholas 1966, 1998), like most studies on rural politics in India, have been carried out by men, and it is possible that male bias has led to the underestimation of women's informal political activities. Women have gained entry into the local governing organs in West Bengal only recently, due to women's quotas, but these formal political activities may have been predated by informal political activities such as participation in disputes. Moreover, historical records tell of women's participation in a wide range of political movements in Bengal since colonial times, conveying a picture of the continuity of women's political involvement (Basu 1992: 19). In Janta, women who are not party activists commonly discuss village politics and become involved in disputes that are labelled political. Of the forty-four women I interviewed in Janta on their voting behaviour, forty-three said they themselves decide whom they vote for.

The Left Front rule has introduced two political arenas for rural women: women's committees (*mohila samiti*) and panchayats (village councils). Basu (1992) gives credit to the women's committees, which the CPI(M) set up in the 1970s and 1980s, for giving peasant women feelings of dignity and for involving women with child welfare, non-formal education, and setting up craft centres, but she criticises the CPI(M) for not challenging the prescribed gender code of conduct and its restrictions. Women's committees have become such a routine phenomenon in Bankura district that the male officers of the district CPI(M) office expressed disbelief when I told them that women were not as extensively organised in my home country, Finland, for instance. The district level organisation of the women's committee is responsible for setting up the committees and drawing general outlines for the local committees' activities. However, because of the difficulty of finding suitable leaders, not all committees are equally active and even the active ones may have dormant periods.

The village riots made the situation too explosive for regular women's meetings in Janta. Moreover, the women's committee had lost its major source of support when the majority of the Tili neighbourhood changed their political affiliation from the Left Front to the BJP. Although local BJP leaders spoke of the need to set up their own women's committee in the village, it seemed unlikely that it could accomplish as much as the CPI(M)-run women's committee due to its lack of district level organisation. Women realised the benefits that the Left Front offered them and one activist who had shifted her support to the BJP even conveyed to me that she was later planning to shift back to the Left Front because of their greater resources for women.

In Janta, the women's committee has been involved in setting up income earning opportunities and adult education classes for women, solving family disputes and fights and making women conscious of their rights. Like the general village meetings, the women's committee meetings can solve disputes by fining the guilty party. If a woman has been mistreated by her family, the committee representatives can help the woman by discussing the situation with her family. Even the threat of the women's committee's involvement may motivate family members to refrain from mistreating a woman.

Women's political agency is limited in that the women's committee is not called on to resolve major village disputes, as the men's general meetings are. On the other hand, in contrast to the unofficial village meetings that often serve the interests of the important men in the village, the women's committee focuses on the questions most women find relevant. Since the Bengali concept of politics does not exclude the women's domain, women's political goals draw their agenda from everyday life. For instance, many women pointed out how, once the women's committee started drawing public attention to family violence, incidents of violence have decreased and been widely condemned in the village. Women's committees have also encouraged women to talk back, not only to listen and obey but to express their opinions and arguments. Women can behave assertively towards men. In the midst of disputes, they used such arguments as, 'Do you think you do not have to listen to me because I am a woman?' While I never saw a woman arguing with her husband's older brothers or her father-in-law, I did witness women talking back to their fathers, husbands, older brothers and neighbours.

The women's committee has been successful in raising women's consciousness of their rights, and women in Janta were more vocal about

the need to challenge societal restrictions than those women interviewed by Basu (1992) in three West Bengal villages in 1979. Widely-shared developmental goals among women in Janta include the need to curb violence towards women, helping women in family disputes, encouraging women to speak out and protest when they face injustice, ensuring women's welfare, arranging opportunities for women to earn an income, encouraging the schooling of children, and the need to broaden women's freedom of movement without a loss of honour.

Both high- and low-caste women participate in the women's committee; however, the women's committee's aims are biased towards the higher-caste women's concerns. High-caste and low-caste women share an agenda to defend women in family disputes, to prevent family violence and ensure women's and children's welfare and education. On the other hand, higher-caste women's concerns such as women's right to move outside the home and earn an income, preferably from *cakri* (service profession), mean little to lower-caste women who already enjoy relatively unrestricted freedom of movement. Lower-caste women are used to earning an income through daily labour and even managing their own incomes. In turn, some of the top concerns for lower-caste women, such as their terms and conditions of work, are better addressed through the peasants' union (Krishak Sabha) and especially the brick workers' union (CITU). One of the most significant gains for women workers—the implementation of an equal pay rate for male and female agricultural labourers—has been brought about by the peasants' union.

Women's committees have contributed to the growing acceptance of women's education, which is also an all-India trend related to various social processes such as the demand for educated brides. Most villagers, regardless of sex or caste, want their daughters to at least learn to read and write, and a growing number of high-caste girls are studying up to the college level. While the first village girls who went to college in the early 1990s faced problems and criticism for moving outside the village, many villagers currently aspire for their daughters to study and take up government jobs, as a few women from Janta have already done.

Women panchayat representatives are commonly criticised for voicing the interests of the men in their families, and Basu (1992: 69), for instance, observed that women panchayat members tended to be more reticent than male members in expressing their views during panchayat deliberations. This may often be the case, but the women representatives whom I met emphasised the importance of looking after women's interests and

did not hesitate to take action. Tapati Kundu, the first female panchayat representative of Janta, related:

> We were six or seven women. We always discussed the work together. We did not discuss things with men much. Why should we depend on men? I used to attend meetings, but we also tried to get money from the government. Money belongs to the society. We women tried to bring money for women. If I would object to something or say something in the panchayat alone, then nobody would listen to me. So, I used to consult other women. If I could not get them all, I gathered some of them and we surrounded (*gherao*) the development block office to get our rights. And when I didn't like some decision taken by the panchayat office, I demanded of them: you have to give me this or our women will be excluded from this facility. You have to give us a house loan. I demanded things for people who had lost their houses and clothes in floods or who did not have clothes for the winter, whose roofs leaked during the monsoon season, who had no roof over their heads. I used to help them get clothes, wheat and paddy from the Block Development Office for those who needed them. I helped those who did not have money for the son's education, who were old or disowned by their husbands or who were widows. I helped them get funding. I used to send those who had failed to get money even after having applied for the second time to the district council. Again, if I did not get any help for the women of our society, I used to go to the district council. I arranged funding for deep tube wells. When I passed the Higher Secondary exam, I wanted to do something. I did not want to sit idle. We are five sisters. I used to worry about my sisters. I used to think about my life, about the well-being of the society. I always thought about women, I used to think how to move forward a little.

Other female representatives I talked to also pointed to the need to serve women's interests, for instance, in health issues and in creating job opportunities for women. They noted how the election of female representatives has made it easier for women to contact the panchayat in order to seek support and help.

Women are able to take advantage of the gendered understanding of politics, although the same symbolic structure also limits their activities. As Basu (1992) points out, CPI(M) policies in West Bengal have cultivated the idea of the traditional Bengali Hindu woman; the consolidation

of private property and tenancy rights in favour of the male household heads has strengthened the traditional patterns of deprivation. In Janta, most women were familiar with the women's committees, but few could consider running for a panchayat election. Most who had done so were living with their natal families or in their natal villages, and were either unmarried or had married within their natal villages. Usually, married women living with their in-laws or in their vicinity cannot consider attending meetings outside their immediate neighbourhood regularly, since they fear that movement outside the house would not be tolerated. Women who become actively involved in politics usually do so after the men in their family have become involved in politics, and subsequently encourage the women to stand for election.

To summarise my interpretation of village politics, I argue that the shared symbolic structure, from which the ideas of politics are drawn, serves various interests. The important men of the village ('big people', *boro lok*) and 'little people' (*chotto lok*), men and women, have new and different demands and interpretations of the goals of politics. Political concepts give rise to critical discourses, but they also rely on shared constructs and this makes the attaining of political goals an ambiguous process wrought with unintended consequences. To conclude, I will now examine the significance of the cultural understanding of politics on the conceptualisation of political processes in rural India.

VI
Interpreting factionalism

Perplexingly, the political disputes in the village bear some resemblance to the political processes characterised by Evans-Pritchard (1940) and Fortes (1945) as the fission and fusion in the lineage model, but also to the notion introduced by the critics of the lineage mode of factionalism. As in the fission and fusion of the lineage model, a political conflict between two people in Janta involves their kinship ties, and the severing of a tie as a result of a dispute activates other ties of solidarity. Lineage theorists did not write about India, but their analyses capture the social morphology of the conflicts in Janta. The obvious complication with applying a lineage model to what occurs in Janta is that the party affiliation itself is considered a form of kinship.

Scholars applying the concept of 'faction' have sought to deal with conflicts, change and individual choice, emphasising that political processes are rarely entirely dominated by kinship. Although there are various

definitions of the concept of faction, factions usually refer to informal, spontaneous, leader-follower groups organised for a particular purpose which disband when that purpose has been accomplished. Most works on rural politics in India utilise the notion of factionalism which, as Dumont (1970: 164) conceives it, does not originate from any indigenous cultural principle. The disputes in Janta bear a resemblance to factionalism in that disputes divide villagers, who then seek patronage from different leaders. Faction is also the word that comes to mind when one tries to account for the political incidents, because villager themselves talk about politics in terms (*bhag*, *daladali*) that appear to correspond to the words 'faction' and 'factionalism'.

However, researchers employing the concept of faction have used it much as lineage theorists do to delineate universal social processes, and not in reference to folk models. The following excerpt from Nicholas (1966: 51), who studied factionalism in rural India, exemplifies the connection between the analysis of factions and the structuralism of the lineage theorists:

> But perhaps, once we have a clear idea of the arrangement of parts in Nuer society, we are ready to examine the fine structure of the parts. Now that the Newtonian principles of classical structuralism are known (if indeed they are), we are prepared to have a look at the structure of the atoms and molecules of the social universe. I think we may find that the elementary components of the fine structure are in constant motion, and that they are related to one another by different principles than are the parts of a classical social structure . . . . At what point of structural analysis should account be taken of factions?

In retrospect many definitions of the concept of faction appear to have described historically specific forms of factionalism. When local elections in India were partyless, factions appeared and were defined as being outside the realm of parties. Bailey (1990), who studied village politics in Orissa, identifies factions as distinct from moral political groups: factions lack a shared ideology and are recruited by a leader with whom the group has a purely transactional relationship. The group supports the leader in the hope of getting favours from him. However, Bailey also notes that political allegiance to factions is compounded with fictional kinship ties. He explains the inconsistency between his definition of faction and observations about kin morality in actual factional politics

by defining factions and moral political groups as ideal types which, in actual life, can appear in combination.

Factional disputes in Janta are short-term, but they entail a moral aspect. Disputes arise when somebody violates the kinship-related code of conduct between the party 'relatives'. Transactional relationships between leaders and followers are not judged merely on material grounds, but on the leaders' ability to act as patrons to their followers. Moreover, the introduction of party elections in rural India has brought party rivalries into factionalism. As the examples from Janta illustrate, parties take sides in disputes and participate in factional conflicts. Short-term factional disputes can be brought to serve parties' long-term interests.

Both the faction and lineage approaches have neglected the symbolism of local categories without which it is not possible to understand the domain of politics in Janta. The villager's comment that 'parties, like big families, do not stay together' points to the heart of the question of factionalism. Kinship and patron–client relationships offer the conceptual framework through which the villagers perceive and practice politics: not only how groups of solidarity dissolve and form again, but also what issues are self-evidently considered political and how and what issues get drawn into political debate. Women's ability to bring new issues to the political debate, as well as low-caste labourers' ability to bargain for their benefits as part of the patron–client relationship, show how new interpretations of the kinship-related code of conduct and patron–client relationship act as a source of social change.

As Hardiman (1999) points out, another problem with the concept of faction has been its preoccupation with vertical ties which link the lowest to the highest at the expense of examining the ties of solidarity within the groups sharing the same hierarchical position.

This is also true for conceptualisation of politics in Bengal as patron–client ties. Hardiman argues that the research on factions has neglected to examine class solidarity as the basis of political organisation. The most obvious proof against the interpretation of the Left Front in West Bengal as a movement by workers as a class to themselves is the fact that the wealthy landowners have not only joined the Left Front movement, but also lead it. Ruud (1994) calls the relationship between the landowners and landless within the CPI(M) a patron–client relationship, whereas Hardiman labels it class collaboration. The political conflicts in Janta illustrate that villagers indeed depend not only on vertical ties, but also rely on their horizontal ties, which they discuss in terms of caste and kinship—not class. However, low-caste labourers and high-caste

landowners perceive their political goals differently. Consequently, salient caste and kinship identities do not exclude an awareness of common class interests.

VII
Conclusion

This article demonstrates the importance of heeding the local meanings of politics for an understanding of political conflicts and processes, rather than subsuming patterns of political alliance under the general heading of factions. The meanings of gender, kinship and patron–client relationships structure how the villagers perceive and practice politics: not only how solidary groups dissolve and reform, but what issues are drawn into the political debate. The article points to the diversity of goals that may be conceived of as political, and to the surge of conflicts and political uncertainty in an era when state policies and new agricultural methods have contributed both to the increase of resources and the dispersal of power in the village. Local politics and national political organisations are shown to be mutually interconnected. It is the linkage between the domain of politics and that of kinship which makes political parties efficient, but which also makes politics a precarious and conflict-ridden business, allowing national party organisations to consolidate their power through intervening in family disputes. In contrast to the portrayal of women as marginal to rural politics, gender is shown to be crucial to the political construction as a whole. As the concept of politics does not exclude home, kinship and the women's domain, the gendered understanding of politics on the one hand limits women's political participation, but simultaneously enables women's political action.

REFERENCES

BAILEY, F.G. 1990 [1969]. *Stratagems and spoils: A social anthropology of politics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

BASU, AMRITA. 1992. *Two faces of protest: Contrasting modes of women's activism in India*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

BASU, DIPANKAR. 2001. Political economy of 'middleness': Behind violence in rural West Bengal. *Economic and political weekly* 36, 16: 1333–44.

BHATTACHARYYA, DWAIPAYAN. 1999. Politics of middleness: The changing character of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in rural West Bengal (1977–90). *In* Ben Rogaly, Barbara Harriss-White and Sugata Bose, eds, *Sonar Bangla? Agricultural*

growth and agrarian change in West Bengal and Bangladesh, pp. 279–302. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

BHAUMIK, SANKAR KUMAR. 1993. *Tenancy relations and agrarian development: A study of West Bengal*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

COHN, BERNARD S. and GERALD D. BERREMAN. 1971. *India: Social anthropology of a civilization*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

COLLIER, JANE FISHBURNE and SYLVIA JUNKO YANAGISAKO, eds. 1992 [1987]. *Gender and kinship: Essays toward a unified analysis*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

DAVIS, MARVIN. 1983. *Rank and rivalry: The politics of inequality in rural West Bengal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DUMONT, LOUIS. 1970. *Homo hierarchicus: An essay on the caste system*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

EVANS-PRITCHARD, E.E. 1940. *The Nuer: A description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people*. Oxford: Clarendon.

FORTES, M. 1945. *The dynamics of clanship among the Tallensi*. London: Oxford University Press.

FRUZZETTI, LINA. 1990 [1982]. *The gift of a virgin: Women, marriage, and ritual in a Bengali society*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

FRUZZETTI, LINA and AKOS ÖSTOR. 1976. Seed and earth: A cultural analysis of kinship in a Bengali town. *Contributions to Indian sociology* 10, 1: 97–132.

GAZDAR, HARIS and SUNIL SENGUPTA. 1999. Agricultural growth and recent trends in well-being in rural West Bengal. *In* Ben Rogaly, Barbara Harriss-White and Sugata Bose, eds, *Sonar Bangla? Agricultural growth and agrarian change in West Bengal and Bangladesh*, pp. 60–91. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

GEERTZ, CLIFFORD. 1980. *Negara: The theatre state in nineteenth-century Bali*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

HANSEN, THOMAS BLOM. 1999. *The saffron wave: Democracy and Hindu nationalism in modern India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

HARDIMAN, DAVID. 1999 [1982]. The Indian 'faction': A political theory examined. *In* Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern studies I: Writings on south Asian history and society*, pp. 198–232. Delhi. Oxford University Press.

KAPFERER, BRUCE. 1988. *Legends of people, myths of state: Violence, intolerance, and political culture in Sri Lanka and Australia*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

LIETEN, G.K. 1992. *Continuity and change in rural West Bengal*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

MALLICK, ROSS. 1993. *Development policy of a communist government: West Bengal since 1977*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

MUKHOPADHYAY, SAMIR KUMAR. 1994. *Permanent settlement to operation Barga*. Calcutta: Minerva Associates.

NICHOLAS, RALPH W. 1966. Segmentary factional politics. *In* M.J. Swartz, V.W. Turner and Arthur Tuden, eds, *Political anthropology*, pp. 49–60. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

———. 1998 [1968]. Structures of politics in the villages of southern Asia. *In* Milton Singer and Bernard S. Cohn, eds, *Structure and change in Indian society*, pp. 243–83. New Delhi: Rawat Publication.

ÖSTÖR, AKOS. 1984. *Culture and power: Legend, ritual, bazaar and rebellion in a Bengali society*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

ROGERS, SUSAN CAROL. 1975. Female forms of power and the myth of male dominance: A model of female/male interaction in peasant society. *American ethnologist* 2, 4: 727–54.

ROSALDO, MICHELLE ZIMBALIST and LOUISE LAMPHERE, eds. 1974. *Women, culture and society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

RUUD, ARILD ENGELSEN. 1994. Land and power: The Marxist conquest of rural Bengal. *Modern Asian studies* 28, 2. 357–80.

STRATHERN, MARILYN. 1988. *The gender of the gift: Problems with women and problems with society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

SWARTZ, MARC J., ed. 1969 [1968]. *Local-level politics* Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

SWARTZ, MARC J., VICTOR W. TURNER and ARTHUR TUDEN. 1966. Introduction. *In* M.J. Swartz, V.W Turner and Arthur Tuden, eds, *Political anthropology*, pp. 1–41. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

YANAGISAKO, SYLVIA JUNKO. 1979 Family and household: The analysis of domestic groups. *Annual review of anthropology* 8: 161–205.

CONTENTS

M.N. SRINIVAS, *Collected essays* (N. Jayaram) 521
ANDRÉ BÉTEILLE, *Sociology: Essays on approach and method* (Sujata Patel) 523
SUJATA PATEL, JASODHARA BAGCHI and KRISHNA RAJ, eds, *Thinking social science in India: Essays in honour of Alice Thorner* (N. Jayaram) 525
DIPANKAR GUPTA, *Culture, space and the nation-state: From sentiments to structure* (Kushal Deb) 527
SURINDER S. JODHKA, ed., *Community and identities: Contemporary discourses on culture and politics in India* (Nissim Mannathukkaren) 531
SUSANNE HOEBER RUDOLPH, LLOYD I. RUDOLPH and MOHAN SINGH KANOTA, eds, *Reversing the gaze. Amar Singh's diary, a colonial subject's narrative of imperial India* (Purnendu S. Kavoori) 533
AJIT K. NEOGY, *Decolonization of French India: Liberation movement and Indo-French relations 1947–1954* (D. Sundaram) 535
JESSICA EVANS and STUART HALL, eds, *Visual culture: The reader*
AND
THEO VAN LEEUWEN and CAREY JEWITT, eds, *Handbook of visual analysis*
AND
MICHAEL EMMISON and PHILIP SMITH, eds, *Researching the visual: Images, objects, contexts and interactions in social and cultural inquiry* (Patricia Uberoi) 537
T. SCARLETT EPSTEIN, A.P. SURYANARAYANA and T. THIMMEGOWDA, *Village voices: Forty years of rural transformation in South India* (S.R. Ahlawat) 540
VANDANA MADAN, ed., *The village in India* (A.R. Vasavi) 541
SARASWATI RAJU, PETER J. ATKINS, NARESH KUMAR and JANET G. TOWNSEND, *Atlas of men and women in India* (Mary E. John) 542
SANJAY SRIVASTAVA, *Constructing post-colonial India: National character and the Doon School* (Meenakshi Thapan) 543

ADITI MUKHERJEE and DUGGIRALA VASANTA, eds,
Practice and research in literacy **(Shobha Satyanath)** 545
PREMA CLARKE, *Teaching and learning: The culture of pedagogy* **(Meenakshi Thapan)** 547
INDRAMANI SINGH and RAJA PARASURAMAN, eds, *Human cognition: A multidisciplinary perspective* **(Amit Ranjan Basu)** 548
ALFRED R. LINDESMITH, ANSELM L. STRAUSS and NORMAN K. DENZIN, *Social psychology* **(Amit Ranjan Basu)** 549
ZARINE COOPER, *Archaeology and history. Early settlements in the Andaman islands* **(Ajay Pratap)** 549
K. SRINIVASAN, *Basic demographic techniques and applications* **(R.P. Tyagi)** 552

M.N. SRINIVAS, *Collected essays*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002 xx + 733 pp. Figures, notes, references, index. Rs 830 (hardback).

In the history of sociology in India, M.N. Srinivas has carved a niche for himself: he was a chief architect of the discipline in the country and remained one of its prominent practitioners for nearly sixty years until his demise late in 1999. Naturally, the corpus of his writings is quite large—about twenty books and anthologies, and about 150 articles and addresses. That a reader should find in one place many of his seminal essays otherwise dispersed in anthologies and journals was Srinivas's idea. *Collected essays* is the realisation of that idea Sadly, Srinivas did not live to see it.

Collected essays presents a selection of forty-two essays and addresses by Srinivas, all but one ('The Evolution of Caste in India') previously published between 1952 and 1997. In his 'Foreword' to the volume, A.M. Shah mentions that forty of these were selected and grouped under eight thematic parts by Srinivas himself. At Shah's suggestion two more essays ('*Varna* and Caste' and 'A Note on Sanskritisation and Westernisation') were added. An interview with Srinivas by Chris Fuller, which first appeared in *Anthropology today* in October 1999, is appended as an 'Afterword'. Since Srinivas did not live long enough to see the completion of his project, he could not pen an Introduction to the volume. So, we will never know why he selected the pieces that he did and why he omitted some (especially the two which came to be included at Shah's suggestion).

Even a cursory glance at these essays would show that Srinivas was extraordinarily sensitive to the changing social reality around him, and that the range of themes on which he reflected was very wide. Besides village, religion, caste and family, which were expectedly his forte, his oeuvre included gender issues, Gandhism, nation-building, literary sensitivity, and science and technology.

Srinivas was a pioneer of village studies in India. Rampura, a village in Karnataka, where he did intensive fieldwork and drew valuable insights, is now on the sociological map of the country. The seven essays in Part I deal with village studies. 'The Indian Village: Myth and Reality', the essay in which Srinivas takes on Louis Dumont, remains a classic exposition of the debate on the nature of village community in India. 'The Social System of a Mysore Village' describes a nucleated village (Rampura) and delineates the village as 'a structural entity'. 'The Dominant Caste in Rampura' elucidates dominance in intercaste relations

and its significance in the understanding of rural social life. Lest the study of rural India suggest an idyllic picture, three essays focus on disputes—intercaste, intracaste, and the joint family—and one essay discusses the significance of the study of village disputes. Srinivas emphasises the importance of studying what he calls the 'submerged legal system'.

The eight essays in Part II deal with caste and social structure, a perennial theme in Srinivas's work. His response to Louis Dumont's work on the caste system (*Homo Hierarchichus*, in particular) is a remarkable reflection on the nature of caste hierarchy. 'The Cohesive Role of Sanskritisation', showing how caste has integrated within the Hindu fold many groups of alien origin without destroying the axial elements of their culture, is insightful. Perhaps, his delineation of the strength and resilience of caste has been almost prophetic!

The three essays in Part III cover such gender issues as the changing position of Indian women, the phenomenon of dowry and the relation between culture and human fertility in India. The three essays in Part IV discuss the social significance of religion in India, the cult of Ayyappa in South India, and Gandhi's religion. The five essays in Part V examine the impact of the introduction of universal adult franchise in India (which Srinivas aptly described as a 'revolution'); the problem of nation-building; the interface between science, technology and rural development; and changing institutions and values.

Srinivas repeatedly reflected upon the status of his craft (three essays in Part VI) and the appropriateness of its tools (eight essays in Part VII). It was Srinivas who was instrumental in integrating social anthropology and sociology in India. His emphasis on fieldwork and participant observation, first laid in the early 1950s, is still apposite. The dilemmas of 'the observer and the observed', 'the insider versus the outsider', and of studying one's own culture are perceptively analysed by him.

Srinivas perceived the possibility of 'self' being a site for the 'other', too (see Shah in 'Foreword', p. xi). Five of his autobiographical essays are included in Part VIII: two specifically focus on his days in MS University of Baroda (1951–59) and University of Delhi (1959–72) respectively, and three deal with his entire educational and professional career till 1972. Surprisingly, there is nothing on these lines after 1972! Informative and instructive as autobiographies often are, Srinivas was aware of the perils of this genre: '. . . I have to steer clear of the Scylla of egotism and the Charybdis of undue modesty. If the former is vulgar, the latter is dishonest' (p. 641).

What is noteworthy about Srinivas's writings is their lucidity. He was a master of English prose who had painstakingly honed the art of writing over the years. Steering clear of jargon, he chose the appropriate words and phrases for what he wanted to say. He coined a neologism only when the concept at hand demanded it; Sanskritisation, vote-bank, and dominant caste are typical examples of such coinages which have entered the social science lexicon, and are used by journalists too. Srinivas is undoubtedly the most readable of the sociologists that India has seen yet.

In *Collected essays* one can '. . . encounter Srinivas through his many interests, his commitment to sociology and social anthropology and to field research as well as his reflections on his life' (Lakshmi Srinivas in 'Preface', p. xiv). As such, this volume must find a place in the personal library of every practitioner of sociology in India.

Goa University N. JAYARAM

ANDRÉ BÉTEILLE, *Sociology: Essays on approach and method*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002. viii + 286 pp. Notes, references, indexes. Rs 545 (hardback).

André Béteille is one of those rare sociologists of India who has perceived his work and practice of teaching and research to have implications for general sociological issues and concerns. His very first research work, titled *Caste, Class and Power* was organised to answer general questions regarding stratification and relate it to specific questions emerging in his field work in Tanjore district. He is aware that Indian sociologists doing research on India are perceived by their colleagues in the West as social anthropologists rather than sociologists. Arguing against this division of labour, he affirms the need for social anthropologists in India to associate their discipline with sociological concerns. The book under review brings together some finely crafted essays, written over the course of the last few years, highlighting general themes of sociological significance.

What are Béteille's reasons for suggesting the need to transcend divisions and combine the two disciplines? In these essays he argues that though the object of study of sociology was Western society and that of social anthropology was the non-west, the differences between these two disciplines are that of degree rather than kind; both deal with 'social relations, social processes, social structures, social institutions and social change in all societies' (p. 29). Common to both sociology and social anthropology is their use of the comparative method. Durkheim, for instance, argued that 'Comparative sociology is not a special branch of sociology; it is sociology itself' (pp. 22, 137). Two essays in this book discuss in detail the comparative method. Also, this theme continues to occupy Béteille's attention in other essays such as those that explore the relationship between sociology and common sense, those that deal with religion, politics and economics, as well as those that deal with science and tradition.

It is this faith in the comparative method that makes Béteille argue against those sociologists who advocate alternate sociologies based on the distinctiveness of culture or nation. Though he acknowledges that particular experiences are significant, he asserts that these cannot be made to privilege one set of values over any other. For Béteille, there can be only 'one' sociology: a general sociology. Alternate sociologies cannot find place in the subjects' practices.

Sociology, for Béteille, is not a set of theoretical positions or perspectives: '(C)oncepts and methods are of little value in themselves. Their value lies in their use in the collection, arrangement and interpretation of empirical material' (p. 30). Sociology is thus a way of doing research; it is a series of practices, crafted from the way the subject has grown. It oscillates from the general to the specific and from the abstract to the concrete; it incorporates concepts fashioned in day to day experience and has over time become detached from the 'sites of their origins'. 'Sociology,' he states, 'does not deal with facts from the entire range of human societies, it seeks to place those facts on the same plane of observation and analysis' (p. 24). No wonder this book is subtitled *Approach and Method.*

It is clear that Béteille's sociology draws overwhelmingly from the writings of Weber and Durkheim. The essays are full of references to these theorists. However, Béteille's Weber is the one who discusses social action, and not the one who understands the nature of capitalism by analysing the *historical* relationship between religion and capitalism. Thus it should come as no surprise to read the statement that he is a 'social anthropologist in the Radcliffe-Brown tradition' (p. 236). These influences resonate in all his essays and in the way he describes sociology's work: to place 'human actions and events in the context of the social processes, structures and institutions within which they occur' (p. 29).

At the end of the book, in an interview in the appendix, Béteille states that sociology 'contribute(s) by way of critical understanding' (p. 241). One wonders what he means by this. It certainly does not imply an acceptance of the Marxist concept of praxis; most of the essays express an antagonism towards the use of values and ideologies in sociological reasoning and the appendix contains an essay questioning the very possibility of a Marxist anthropology. While Béteille does not elaborate his theory on what kind of value will indeed elucidate such a critical theory, it seems that a specific kind of liberal politics is being advocated.

There was a time when discussions within sociology remained caught up in the binaries of value neutrality against value assertion. Since then, the debate has moved on to ask questions regarding modernity, reflectivity and sociological reasoning, and has been influenced by theories of risk and trust in understanding the consequences of modernity. Critical to this debate is the use and position of classical theorists in this discussion and an assessment of contemporary society in terms of new forms of inequality, defined by environmental risks on the one hand and new social movements on the other. It is surprising that this book does not discuss any of these issues. Béteille, who wishes to frame his sociology in general sociological terms and uses classical theorists such as Weber and Durkheim, has ignored this debate in this book of essays. Is it because these debates deal with new forms of modernity, restricted to the West and therefore not relevant to contemporary processes in India? If so, are we not likely to repeat the divisions of intellectual labour which Béteille so correctly questions? Or is it because

Béteille believes that, like tradition, modernity is a value and an ideology that should not be discussed, in contrast to sociological theory, epistemology and methodology?

It is difficult to answer these questions because this book contains essays written at different points of time that are not chapters of a composite book. What is clear, however, is that Béteille's references are not to contemporary sociological debates. Rather, it is the questions raised by the corpus of empirical work done by social anthropologists in India, in Calcutta and Delhi, and those who have utilised the 'field view' and not 'book view' to do their research. Additionally, it is his own interests in the areas of religion, kinship, stratification and inequality that have directed his enquiries and comments on sociology. And because he does not see the latter issues as those that need sociological theorising (interestingly his essays on inequality are brought out separately), his intervention in general sociology seems restricted and self-confined. This is sad because André Béteille is one sociologist of his generation in India who could have taken this discussion forward and erected a bridge between the sociologies of the West and the East.

University of Pune SUJATA PATEL

SUJATA PATEL, JASODHARA BAGCHI and KRISHNA RAJ, eds, *Thinking social science in India: Essays in honour of Alice Thorner*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002, 468 pp. Tables, figures, plates, notes, references, bibliography, index, Rs 795 (hardback).

The Thorners, Alice and her husband Daniel, are well known to social scientists in India. Since the 1940s both of them have been concerned with India and the Indians; and after Daniel's death in 1974, Alice has continued her abiding interest in social science reflections on the changing economy, society and polity in India. Her scholarly interests and amiable personality have influenced several scholars spanning two generations and across three continents. It is only apposite that her friends in the profession have thought of honouring her with this Festschrift.

Sujata Patel introduces Alice as 'a silent institution-builder in the social sciences in India' (p. 14). The range of Alice's intellectual interests, as revealed by the select bibliography of her writings provided at the end of the volume, is impressive. The thirty-one essays in this volume cover 'themes in social sciences in India that Alice and Daniel together and later Alice on her own have worked on and researched in the course of the years' (p. 27). Each of the first three parts has seven essays. Part one deals with methodological issues; Part two analyses the various facets of economic change since Independence; Part three explores some issues in the cultural realm in India today; and the ten essays in Part four seek to interpret the colonial heritage and the contemporary political process in India.

Commenting in detail on all these essays is beyond the scope of this review. Among the essays on themes and methodological issues, Nirmal Kumar Chandra reviews Chayanov's views on 'the small peasant', Utsa Patnaik reflects on famine and measuring 'famine deaths'; Jacques Pouchepadass analyses subaltern studies as a post-colonial critique of modernity; Maithreyi Krishnaraj discusses M.N. Srinivas's contribution to understanding gender; Uma Chakravarti comments on the marginalisation of women's scholarship; and Leela Gulati provides a text-bookish note on the case study method.

Considering its novelty and insightfulness, I found Elizabeth Whitcombe's comparative analysis of the seasonal variations and the transmission of diseases in the colonial Madras and Punjab to be instructive. A practising physician, Whitcombe shows how the rich material from the British Indian archives can be used to reconstruct the metereological and medical history of such killer diseases of the subcontinent as cholera and malaria.

On the journey of India's economy since Independence, Ashok Mitra outlines the general trends; K. Saradamoni examines poverty and inequality in the first three five-year plans; K.S. Krishnaswamy discusses current issues in labour and employment, Gita Sen presents an account of the gendered labour markets and their implications in the context of globalisation in Asia; Joan Mencher highlights the adverse impact of the shift in emphasis from land reforms in the late 1950s to commercial agriculture now; and Achin Vanaik reflects on the new middle-class consumerism.

Written as a letter addressed to Alice, N. Krishnaji's essay brings to her notice a remarkable empirical observation about child mortality differentials and the explanation for it by the Basu couple, Alaka and Kaushik. Reanalysing the data, he shows how 'the correlation between work-status of mothers and child mortality is a spurious one, caused by poverty levels influencing the two correlated variables in predictable ways' (p. 190). For those engaged in quantitative analysis, this sounds a serious caution: 'If strong statistics behind obvious explanations seem too good to be true, one has to search for more convincing alternative explanations' (p. 187).

The seven essays on the cultural sphere are the richest in terms of information, interpretation and insights. Meena Alexander presents the musings of 'a migrant memory' on 'the question of home'. Elucidating the gendered moral regulations as reflected in epic poetry, Nabaneeta Dev Sen analyses Chandrabati's *Ramayana*, a Bengali woman's retelling of the Rama-tale in the 16th century. The negotiation of gendered space by women is the theme of Neera Desai's study of the autobiographical articulations of Narmad Dahigauri and Sharda Mehta in the Gujarati language Tista Bagchi focuses on 'linguistic fieldwork' with reference to minority languages in India

Drawing upon qualitative (literary and biographical) and quantitative (demographic and other) data from one large south Indian Muslim *khandaan* (extended family), Sylvia Vatuk discusses 'how old women in this family lived their lives

in the past' (the early 19th century) and 'how their roles in the family and outside it changed over time' (to the mid-1980s) (p. 248). She pays special attention to fertility, marriage, work, residential patterns, and family relationships.

'"Baby" iconography' is the theme of Patricia Uberoi's 'suggestive, more than definitive', essay. Its theme, 'the conceptualisation of the child', seems simple enough. However, the material the uses, 'a set of printed images from a large personal collection of Indian calender art acquired over the last 35 or more years', is novel and ingenious, indeed (p. 264). G. Arunima's essay explores the many meanings of friendship—allies, confidantes and beloveds—as represented in three early 19th century Malayalam novels: C.V. Raman Pillai's *Marthanda Varma* (1892), Padoo Menon's *Lakshmi Keshavam* (1892), and O. Chandu Menon's *Indulekha* (1889).

The essays in the last part dwell on the intersections between history and politics· Amiya Kumar Bagchi analyses the 'complicated relationship' between nationalism and human development; Jim Masselos delineates the different articulations of the idea of 'the imagined past of the nation'; David Lelyveld explores the implications of the distinction between *filmi* and *akashvani* Hindi; and Christophe Jaffrelot examines the changing identity of the Jats—Kshatriyas, kisans, or backwards—in North India. The three essays by Claude Markovits, Nasir Tyabji, and Eleanor Zelliot focus respectively on Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar. Rajni Kothari, Manoranjan Mohanty and Sunanda Sen discuss well-trodden themes like democracy, rights and pluralism.

As with any Festschrift, while no reader is likely to be interested in all these essays, every reader is sure to find some essay or the other to be of interest.

Goa University N. JAYARAM

DIPANKAR GUPTA, *Culture, space and the nation-state: From sentiments to structure*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000. 282 pp. References, bibliography, index. Rs 445 (hardback).

Dipankar Gupta intends to extend the concerns of anthropology to include considerations of the nation-state. Nation-states, according to him, do not exist in a pure state. One needs to understand how the collective *sentiments* about the nation are sustained and regulated by the *structures* of the state. Gupta analyses the strong collective sentiments towards the nation by looking critically at the concepts of culture and space. In order to include both power and conflict in his conceptualisation of culture, he wants to understand culture in terms of the *root metaphors* which govern interaction between people. Root metaphors are concerned with the establishment of a moral social order and with notions of what is a *good life*. This in turn helps them to evoke affectivity and generate strong partisanship and intense loyalty. Being multivocal, they can also be made to work over a variety of settings. This notion of culture is intimately enmeshed

with the notion of *space* because culture is essentially subscription to spatially enlivened root metaphors, which are generally ascriptive in character. To say space is to say encultured space, and this makes it different from geography. It also gives us an idea as to why the territory of a nation-state is sacralised and not seen simply as lineaments on a map.

Gupta also differentiates between culture and artifacts, space and non-space and root metaphors and *lex*. While culture is deeply committed to space, artifacts are not. They are free agents and can freely roam diverse locales. Similarly, non-spaces are indifferent to root metaphors. Membership in non-space does not demand affectivity. Examples of non-space are airports, national highways, supermarkets and apartment complexes. Unlike root metaphors, which are effective singly, and do not require back-up from other like-minded metaphors, the norms of non-spaces call out to other norms on the principle of 'elective affinity'. Thus *lex* are the package of rules of non-spaces that call out to each other for mutual reinforcement. Bureaucratic space is an example of *lex*.

Nation-states often come into being in moments of high emotion and euphoria. What becomes more important is the task of sustaining the fraternity that was forged at the time of formation, and this is accomplished through deliberate measures of statehood. This is where citizenship becomes crucial. Through the principles of citizenship, the commonality threatened by the inequalities of social and economic life is addressed, so that fraternity is preserved. The fraternity is not for making everyone equal in every respect, but for giving every individual citizen a chance at realising equality. For this the emergence of civil society is important. Gupta defines civil society as a set of conditions within which individuals interact collectively with the state. He discusses various conceptions of civil society including Béteille's ideas on intermediate institutions like universities, judiciaries, hospitals and corporations. But he is critical of both Béteille and cultural critics like Rajni Kothari for distrusting the modern state and letting it off the hook as far as its responsibility for the welfare of its citizens is concerned. He stresses the Hegelian understanding of civil society where intermediate institutions possess autonomy intrinsically because they are aspects of a democratic state.

While civil society sets the conditions for attaining fraternity, the structures and policies of the nation-state actually help in the attainment of this goal. In this context, Gupta discusses Rawls' formulations on justice as fairness as worked out under a veil of ignorance. He supports Rawls' difference principle as the category of the least advantaged, not pinned to any cultural group or community *a priori*, where all that matters is that the person concerned should be the worst off. From here Gupta moves on to the issue of positive discrimination in India by comparing Ambedkar's reservation policy as enshrined in the Constitution and the Mandal Commission recommendations implemented in 1990. Gupta feels that while Ambedkar wanted to undermine the institution of caste, Mandal advocates the use of caste as a permanent asset to be exploited for political and

economic ends. Gupta is strongly against reservations in perpetuity and advocates the usage of poverty as the key variable for determining the worst off. He, therefore, supports the positive discrimination policy of SCs and STs as long as it leads to the creation of assets in a market-oriented liberal society. But he is strongly against the reservations for OBCs as these are communities with adequate social assets.

He finally looks at the debate on secularism and the issue of minority protection. Here he differentiates between secularism as an ideology and secularisation as a process. He is against any notification of permanent minorities as it rigidifies boundaries of communities. Instead he wants us to understand the process of *minoritization* which often breaks protocols and targets those who are not official minorities.

While Dipankar Gupta's book throws up new and exciting ideas about the complex relationship between culture, space and the nation-state, one foresees a few problems with his conceptual categories and his readings of other scholars. For instance, the concept of *root metaphor* becomes too broad and loose a category when used to explain both consenting and dissenting views of very divergent groups. The origins of root metaphors are never made clear, nor the reasons for their rise to prominence and eventual decline, except for stating that they revolve around notions of the good life and change with changing technology. Moreover, any cultural value can be called a root metaphor, ranging from ideas about purity/pollution, individualism, renunciation, non-violence, or the melting pot to metaphors of bride-takers being superior to bride-givers. This makes root metaphors more of a descriptive category and limits its explanatory potential.

One also disagrees with Gupta's interpretations of the work of some scholars. When he discusses the issue of space, he very cursorily dismisses both Lefebvre and Foucault, stating rather haughtily that 'both of them appear to lack a conceptual understanding of space' (p. 107). Gupta also seems to derive his understanding of Lefebvre from David Harveys' work who, as is well known, has a very different position on space than Lefebvre. In fact, one can counter argue that it is Gupta (rather than Lefebvre or Foucault) who has a physical, three-dimensional notion of space because space becomes important for him only when certain root metaphors with their regnant meanings become active on it. So space is still looked at either as an *inert medium* or a *container* in which root metaphors get activated, with no explanatory potential of its own. Second, being intimately linked with root metaphors, space seems to suffer from a sense of *stasis*, an immobility, evident in statements like: 'It is in the process of becoming that time shakes space, but once space re-establishes itself, time becomes a secondary feature and is blanched off its sociological referents' (p. 47). Similarly, like 'locality studies', which have been often criticised by Marxist scholars, there is an attempt to institute horizons, to establish boundaries, to secure the identity of places. This is apparent in the following statement:

'A new theory of socialism must now centrally involve *place* . . . . The language of international socialism, which seeks to communicate to all, ends up by not communicating to anybody' (p 39).

Furthermore, for Gupta, recreation of cultural spaces seems easy and non-problematic. He nonchalantly declares that the majority of rural Sikh migrants were comfortably re-located after Partition whereas the urban migrants faced great trauma (p. 37); and that the resentment of tribal communities against displacement arises not so much from being tied to a geographical location as from a distrust towards the government's ability to resettle them in appropriate cultural locations (p. 101). Gupta also misunderstands Harvey's argument on 'annihilation of space through time' as conveying the idea 'that there is either no material practice in the post-modern condition, or that material practice can now take place outside physical space' (p. 108). Harvey, on the other hand, has used this concept for both the modernist and the so-called post-modernist phase of capitalist accumulation. 'Annihilation of space by time' takes place in the modernist phase when the various processes of capitalist accumulation are concentrated in close proximity in cities and when the time spent in the 'sphere of circulation of capital' is reduced by building expressways, warehouses and airports. In the post-modernist phase this concept is used to explain the time-space compression and the whole process of post-Fordist flexible accumulation on a global scale, when according to Castells, 'space of flows' dominates over 'space of place'.

Similarly, while discussing Kymlicka's attempts at incorporating liberal theory of individual choice with community rights of minority cultures, Gupta unfairly criticises Kymlicka for his inability to account for dissenters within communities (pp. 205–9). Gupta states that for Kymlicka, preservation of minority culture is an end in itself. But Kymlicka in his book ***Multicultural citizenship*** (1995) has very clearly distinguished *external protection* for minority groups from the issue of *internal restrictions* on community members, supporting the issue of external protection and arguing strongly against any kind of internal restrictions on group members that might curtail the right of group members to question and revise traditional authority.

Finally, one must point out a few typographical errors. On page 23, the word 'universalism' has been erroneously used in line 31 instead of 'particularism', and on page 30 the reference reads as (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1997) while according to the bibliography it should be either 1991 or 1998.

However these criticisms should not distract our attention away from the various merits of the book. This is probably one of the very few books written by an Indian sociologist that seriously grapples with issues which have till now remained the domain of political theorists.

Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay KUSHAL DEB
Mumbai

SURINDER S. JODHKA, ed., *Community and identities: Contemporary discourses on culture and politics in India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001. 269 pp. References, index. Rs 300 (hardback).

Community, culture and identity have been the new buzzwords in social sciences for the last two decades or so. This volume put together by Surinder Jodhka seeks to map the contours of this 'cultural turn' in the Indian context. In his introduction (Ch. 1) Jodhka argues against the tendency to see it as an academic enterprise reducible to the post-modernist/post-structuralist turn in Western academy, and locates it in the erosion of the evolutionist modernisation paradigm exemplified by the 'Nehruvian agenda' in India. But by positing an 'open ended view of culture' (p. 27), he avoids the essentialist trap of nativism/indigenism and also goes beyond the instrumentalism inherent in elite manipulation theories of community and identity.

In a balanced theoretical excursus, Carol Upadhya (Ch. 2) argues that primordialism, which was the dominant tendency in Indian sociology, followed the Western foundational dichotomies of gemeinschaft/gesellschaft (community/society), West/East, and culture/economy. But her brief against ahistorical primordialism/substantivism does not make her a supporter of an unalloyed constructivism, for she realises that often subaltern groups have only the 'authenticity' of their identity to appeal to.

Sasheej Hegde (Ch. 3) argues that theorising about community and identity is impossible without simultaneously reflecting upon the 'condition that is "us"' (p. 60). Through an engagement with Partha Chatterjee's writings, he calls for an understanding of 'modernity as contextual/contested' (ibid.) and the need for reinscribing the community as a counter to a universal modernity. But Hegde's exegesis of Chatterjee, which claims that the latter has gone beyond the dualism of tradition and modernity, is highly problematic. In fact, Chatterjee's positing of democracy against modernity and civil society against political society hardly overcomes the binarising logic: it merely reproduces the (modernist) dichotomies that he sets out to problematise (as Upadhya notes).

Ravinder Kaur (Ch. 4) rightly bemoans the current tendency of unabashed criticism of the state which leaves civil society and community uninterrogated. Following a constructivist approach that takes into account the interplay of power and agency which underlies the processes of identity and community formation allows her to understand the Janus-faced nature of community.

Javeed Alam (Ch. 5) very perceptively debunks one of the myths of modernisation, that appeals to caste can always be reduced to casteism. He argues that the collective nature of unfreedom in India, unlike Europe, has made the struggle for emancipation community-based rather than one based on the individual. The Left in India could benefit immensely from Alam's plea that the struggle

for 'recognition' on the part of the oppressed is as important as the one for substantive equality.

D. Parthasarathy's essay (Ch. 6) on the Kapunadu movement in Andhra Pradesh—which united several sub-castes under its umbrella—again reaffirms the contextual and conjunctural nature of communities. Even though he goes beyond state discourses (as in many strands of constructivism) to analyse larger socio-political and economic processes of exclusion engendered by a 'specific kind of lumpen capitalist development' (p. 117) to understand the rise of social movements, he regresses into Marxist reductionism and teleology when he locates their rise solely in the absence of a fully developed class structure. This belief in the linear transition from community to class, paradoxically, is precisely what the rest of the volume has made the object of critique.

A.R. Vasavi's analysis (Ch. 7) of Lingayats, Nadars and farmers explicates the different kinds of narratives (economic, cultural, nation-state) by which communities reconstitute themselves or by which they are reconstituted. But it is difficult to agree with Vasavi's analysis that capital is not inimical to the interests of the community. In the case of the Nadars, while capital may have helped the collective interests of the community till independence, a significant class differentiation has occurred within them since then, something which the author has unfortunately chosen not to analyse.

Sujata Patel's essay (Ch. 8) on the Baliapal movement in Orissa against the state decision to build a missile test range in the region shows again that communities are not pre-modern vestiges but are in constant formation. It also reaffirms our faith in people's capacity to resist oppression by overcoming the differences of caste, class, gender, tribe, etc.

Aparna Rayaprol (Ch. 9) focuses on the Indian immigrants in the US and very rightly questions the notion of a monolithic diasporic community. A major lacuna in her analysis is that she tends to read the immigrant communities' participation in temple rituals and associated activities more as an expression of nostalgia and as an 'act of cultural return' (p. 175). This 'secular' reading fails to account for the recent alarming spread of *hindutva* ideology among them.

Satish Deshpande's essay (Ch. 10) throws light on a very neglected aspect in globalisation studies—'the *concrete spatial dynamics* at intermediate levels between the local and the global, such as the national, regional or micro-level' (p. 193). While arguing that the 'geography of identity' is linked to the 'geography of social life' (p. 206), he is not implying that each location can be studied as a closed entity but only points to the cultural and geographical boundaries of identity formation. More studies like this can alone temper the globalisation theorists' euphoric celebration of 'hybridity' and spatial 'liminality'.

Rowena Robinson's essay (Ch. 11) on the Christian communities in India does not add anything substantial to the already existing literature. But the interaction between Catholicism and Hinduism at the lower levels of both the divine hierarchy and the larger social order as discussed in her study can provide

immense resources for building a secular society. What are the new kind of narratives employed by the Christian communities to counter the threat posed by the *sangh parivar* in the last few years—is an important question that the author chooses not to deal with.

Anupama Roy (Ch. 12) raises very pertinent questions about the relationship between the 'two languages of rights'—that of the citizen and of the community. She argues that the privileging of the nation during colonialism and of secularism (as appeasement of minorities, not the ideal) in the present have resulted in the systematic occlusion of women's rights. As she notes, it is a sad irony that women's struggles for citizenship rights through a uniform civil code have been appropriated by the Hindu Right.

Community, as Jean-Luc Nancy would put it, 'far from being what society has crushed or lost, is *what happens to us*—question, waiting, event, imperative—*in the wake of society*' (*The inoperative community*, Minneapolis, 1991: 11–12). While we should be wary of all kinds of essentialisms, when it comes to identities, it should also be kept in mind that, as Paul Ricoeur has reminded us, they do acquire some permanence and fixity through the narratives we use to make sense of ourselves. Overall, the book under review is a fairly good addition to the existing literature. Its greatest strength is that it tries to understand the assertions based on community and identity without in any way valorising them or assuming a split between culture, politics and economy. Such maladies have afflicted many of the communitarian and 'new social movements' discourses. Missing in this otherwise appreciable collection are essays on the emergence of Dalits as a community in the last two decades, and on Muslims or tribal identities. In the end, the discourse of community cannot be understood without understanding the rapidly growing discourse of individual rights. In fact, the two should be viewed as existing in a dialectical relationship. In that light, one would have welcomed more discussion akin to that of Roy's in the last chapter.

Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

NISSIM MANNATHUKKAREN

SUSANNE HOEBER RUDOLPH, LLOYD I. RUDOLPH and MOHAN SINGH KANOTA, eds, *Reversing the gaze. Amar Singh's diary, a colonial subject's narrative of imperial India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000. xvii + 625 pp. Figures, plates, map, notes, glossary, index. Rs 595 (hardback).

This volume presents extracts from a diary written at the turn of the century now behind us, that is, in the high years of the British Imperium. The diarist is a male, of aristocratic descent, born and brought up in the princely states of Jaipur and Jodhpur in what is now Rajasthan. Part of a much more extensive collection of folio notes, the published extracts record the educative years of the diarist's life, and his experiences as a military officer and as a nobleman in court

society. The material has been edited with great care and is presented in five sections grouped thematically rather than chronologically.

Section I introduces Amar Singh, the diarist, describing the social and political context in which he grows and develops a personality. The editors seek to make a case for the diary as a subjective form of ethnography, expressing the liminal position of the author. The section is brought to a close with extracts sketching out the principal characters and preoccupations engaging the diarist's attention. In Section II, the diarist takes us along on his first military expedition—to China. As part of a Jodhpur cavalry unit, Amar Singh sees some action in the Boxer Rebellion and returns home a minor hero. The experience provides him his first exposure to a world beyond Rajasthan. He gets a taste of racism at the same time that he gains useful professional and social experience. Section III depicts Amar Singh's life in Jodhpur court society, his marriage, and his first steps as a householder. In Section IV the diarist goes off for military training at the newly formed Imperial Military Academy. This substantial section describes his daily life and experience during the course, most of it concerning pecking order squabbling between cadets and their interactions with British staff officers. Section IV brings the reader back to the diarist's home and we are introduced to the intrigue and wrangling that goes on within an extended patriarchal Rajput household. In the last section (V) we come full circle to once again enter life in the court society of Jodhpur and Jaipur.

There are a large number of helpful photographs, maps and illustrating material scattered through the book. On page 165 there is a memorable picture of 'a group of some soldiers of all nations collected in China', including the diarist. Whilst most of the period portraits are stereotypically pompous, there is on page 362, a portrait of 'Kaloo my servant', which is for a change honest and intimate. On page 375 there is a strikingly beautiful picture of 'The family coach and four on Agra road'. Apart from the photographs there are some useful maps, but we have an overdose of illustrations, mostly cover pages of books that the diarist read.

Other than writing his diary, what does Amar Singh do? One ardent passion is reading. Amar Singh reads with regularity and discipline although the range of books tends towards the school-boyish. His other great love is horse riding. He plays polo with enthusiasm and skill. Pig sticking and hunting are two other great interests. Apart from blood-sport Amar Singh seems to have enjoyed attending marriages. There are two detailed accounts of weddings, his own and that of a younger friend. Other than these activities most of Amar Singh's energies seem to be spent negotiating with British superiors and aristocratic betters. Although there are moments of tenderness and pathos in his account of family life, there are no hidden gems in this Diary. Amar Singh is a most matter of fact narrator; sadly not even the silences murmur.

Is this then yet another book cashing in on Raj nostalgia and princely romance? While there is no doubt that the distinguished editors and their collaborator

have done a thorough and unexceptionable job, the diary itself is an unremarkable even tedious narrative. Most personal diaries, however meticulously maintained, do not warrant publication. A professional soldier, Amar Singh comes across as an earnest and likeable figure, but a mediocre and monotonous recorder of life and events. While admiring the quality of the editing and the sensitivity of the commentary, I must confess to serious discomfort with the title given to the volume. The claim to 'Reversing the Gaze' is quite unfounded. Amar Singh's gaze is an unabashedly imperial one, there is nothing remotely critical about it; not unless you count grumbling over promotions. Having become 'liberated from the epistemological claims of positive truth' (p. 28), the editors talk of 'privileging Amar Singh's knowledge over theirs' (p. 29). I would personally have been much more satisfied if the volume had more of the Rudolphs and less of Amar Singh. Writing history is a historian's job. An old soldier's tale can never substitute for it.

One last complaint—for a book that will inevitably adorn many a coffee table, the quality of binding is poor. Much worse, there are gaps in page numbering and sequence. In my review copy, page 446 was followed by page 511, and page 526 by page 463. The pages in between, i.e., 446 to 463 were missing. One expects better from Oxford.

Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur PURNENDU S. KAVOORI

AJIT K. NEOGY, *Decolonization of French India: Liberation movement and Indo-French relations 1947–1954*. Pondicherry: French Institute of Pondicherry (with CERSOI and Groupment de Research Ocean Indien du CNRS, France and MSH, Paris), 1997. xxviii + 299 pp. Maps, notes, appendices, bibliography, index. Rs 400 (paperback).

Decolonization of French India by Ajit K. Neogy is about the socio-political mobilisation of the liberation movement in French India, the process of colonial repression, and the responses of the newly-independent Indian republic. The narration begins with the condition of French India after the Second World War and traverses through the diplomatic endeavours of the French and Indian governments; the pro-merger and anti-merger movements in the French Indian colonial theatre; the socio-cultural conditioning of the colonised; and the craving of the colonialist for the retention of the French Indian territory within a French Union. The book has thirteen chapters vividly describing the facts and events of this saga.

The French Indian settlements had pre-colonial socio-cultural ties with the contiguous British-Indian territory, which was decolonised a little earlier than the French settlements. The settlements had no autonomy, and there was the involvement of a third party, namely the Indian government. In this unique mixture of similarities and differences, the liberation movement of the French

Indian territory was shaped, according to Neogy, by a number of factors: (*a*) the political dynamics of the Third and Fourth French republics; (*b*) the weak economy of France after the two World Wars; (*c*) reform measures like universal suffrage, representation in local municipalities, the assembly of French India and the national assembly of France: (*d*) the split between pro- and anti-mergerites; (*e*) local French Indian politics dominated by thugs nurtured by the French-Indian Governors; and (*f*) the radical resistance in Chandharnagore and Mahe. In this context, the 'June Declaration' of 29 June 1948 marked the beginning of the French and Indian governments' dialogue over the decolonisation process.

Chapters 5 to 9 and 12 deal with the developments over the period of seven years and three months from June 1948 to November 1954 that ended 240 years of French rule. They are lucid accounts of the decolonisation process as a socio-political construct. The insistence by the French Government on the necessity of a referendum, and the Government of India's acceptance of this proposal, combined with the duplicity of the former and callousness of the latter, resulted in a prolonged and agonising liberation struggle for the pro-mergerites. It also offered a green pasture for the political thugs representing the anti-mergerites in Pondicherry, and elbowroom for French machinations. Ultimately, Kizur, a tiny village in Indian territory, was chosen to hold the referendum on the merger issue on 18 October 1954. The referendum was in favour of a merger with the Indian Union.

The story of the liberation struggle demonstrates how the colonial consciousness is constructed in a given context; who the actors are and what their ideological constructs are; and how the ideological constructs of the liberation process are transformed into strategies for mobilisation and counter mobilisation. Given that the decolonisation process is the product of both local and trans-local contexts, it involved a maze of political and diplomatic intrigues of the various agencies and groups of the colonised and colonising people.

In this era of globalisation and market-driven governance, this account of the decolonisation process provides an example of how traders can be transformed into colonisers, and also of how the very same colonisers are forced to give up the colonised territory to the local interests because of anti-colonial mobilisation With this book, Ajit Neogy has joined other major scholars of decolonisation. such as Bhiku Parekh, M.E. Chamberlin, R.F. Holland, J. Gallagher and others.

A gap in this anti-colonial story is on the issue of referendum. Why did the European colonisers insist on a referendum—a Versailles principle of self-determination—for their colonised countries in non-European contexts, while at the same time simply transfering German colonies in Europe to British and French control? As the French Indian settlements were physically and socially contiguous with Indian Territory, the question of self-determination or a referendum was redundant. Similarly, the then Indian Prime Minister's failure to

recognise that issue of culture and its preservation is different from the political issue that should have been highlighted. The Indian government's diplomatic inability to reject the French demand for a referendum (especially when France was apprehensive of India over the Indo-China issue) is another issue which the author has failed to highlight.

CReNIEO, Chennai D. SUNDARAM

JESSICA EVANS and STUART HALL, eds, *Visual culture: The reader*. London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications/The Open University, 1999. xviii + 478 pp. Figures, plates, notes, index.

AND

THEO VAN LEEUWEN and D CAREY JEWITT, eds, *Handbook of visual analysis*. London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000. xiii + 210 pp. Figures, plates, notes, index. £18.99.

AND

MICHAEL EMMISON and PHILIP SMITH, eds, *Researching the visual: Images, objects, contexts and interactions in social and cultural inquiry*. London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000. xiv + 241 pp. Figures, plates, notes, index. £18.99.

The recent special issue of this journal on 'Visual practices and ideologies in modern India' (vol. 36, nos 1&2, ed. Sumathi Ramaswamy), among several other recent and forthcoming publications, reflects a growing interest in the social scientific study of South Asian visual cultures. This interdisciplinary enterprise extends beyond art history on the one hand, and folkloristics on the other, to include address to the practices and products of the modern mass culture industries, and much else besides. So far, however, this so-called visual 'turn' appears to be more 'global' than 'local' in inspiration; sociologists and social anthropologists are only minor players in the rather motley team; and the effort is mostly un- or under-theorised and methodologically un-selfconscious. Indeed, most Indian sociologists assume that visual culture is a rather frivolous object of study (compared to the grave social issues that their profession should properly address); and, moreover, that it requires no special training beyond the application of commonsense and intuition. Visual culture is generally not, therefore, a subject that finds recognition in sociology syllabi.

The three books under review here, all of them from Sage Publications, are conceived as teaching texts for courses on visual culture, the first covering the dominant theoretical positions in the field, and the latter two, the nuts-and-bolts techniques of visual analysis. Jessica Evans' and Stuart Hall's visual culture reader is a veritable Who's who? of media and cultural studies. Divided into

three sections, Part I introduces the likes of Norman Bryson (the advent of naturalism in art history), Roland Barthes (the rhetoric of the image; 'myth'), Victor Burgin (the medium of photography), Michel Foucault (panopticism), Walter Benjamin (mechanical reproduction), Susan Sontag (the photographic image), Guy Debord (modernity as spectacle), and Dick Hebdige (popular youth culture). This lays the ground for Part II, 'Regulating photographic meanings', which focuses on theoretical and methodological approaches to the medium of photography, and on studies of specific photographic practices. Indeed, though the volume is concerned with visual culture in general, its chief empirical focus is photography, to the relative neglect of other media, genres and practices.

Sociologists will probably find the third part of the volume, 'Looking and subjectivity', more interesting, for this is where the essays move beyond the semiotic model, narrowly conceived, to locate the visual 'sign' within a political economy of image production, distribution and consumption, and in reference to the subjectivity of the viewer whose social location shapes the act of seeing and ensures that '"the meaning" of the image cannot be seen as fixed, stable or univocal across time or cultures' (p. 311). Stuart Hall's neat introduction to this section spells out the cultural studies approach, and its heterogeneous sources of theoretical inspiration from political economy to psychoanalysis: these include Louis Althusser's concept of 'ideological state apparatuses'; Sigmund Freud's notions of the fetish and of the scopophilic instinct (pleasure in looking); the Lacanian input via Kaja Silverman; and the psychoanalytic concept of fantasy, leading into Homi Bhabha's reflections on 'stereotype and colonial discourse'. Acknowledging sex and race as key components of subjectivity, a number of essays, including Laura Mulvey's well-known 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', consider issues of 'the gendering of the gaze', and the volume concludes with a set of articles on 'seeing and racial difference'.

The star-studded cast of contributors no doubt lends both lustre and intellectual respectability to the social scientific study of visual culture, but the selection here is rather sectarian in its exclusive endorsement of the *semiotic* approach (albeit moderated by political economy and psychoanalysis). It is also heavily biased towards high theory, to the exclusion of middle-level theory and worked-out examples, and obviously none of this is easy reading. The density is enhanced by the fact that the essays are mostly edited down to their bare bones, losing much in the process. Indeed, one mourns the disfigurement of well-loved classics like Barthes' 'Myth today' or Benjamin's 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction'. Presumably, a talented teacher would make good this lack, or an unusually conscientious student would have recourse to the originals, but as a self-study manual this volume is probably not as useful nor as robust as it looks. (Indeed, as though to emphasise the point, the book fell apart in my hands even before I had reached the end!)

The other two books are not so grand, but probably pedagogically more useful. Though both have an overall semiotics/cultural studies slant, they manage to

render this approach more accessible and doable, as well as to give fair consideration to other methodologies and perspectives. For instance, the van Leeuwen and Jewitt volume includes essays on techniques of content analysis (its uses, pitfalls and limitations); visual anthropology (the use of visual records for describing past and present ways of life, or for photo-elicitation in the field); the approach of cultural studies (addressed to contemporary modes of cultural production and consumption); visual semiotics/iconography (inspired by Roland Barthes); psychoanalytical image analysis (specifically, in this case, the therapeutic use of children's drawings); social semiotics (images in their social context); the ethnomethodological approach to visual analysis (in the context of social interaction); and on methodologies for the analysis of TV and cinema (through a case study of a documentary film on hospital patient care).

While address to the visual politics of TV and cinema is something of an afterthought in the van Leeuwen/Jewitt volume, the Emmison and Smith book deliberately passes over the analysis of moving images as a field that is too complex to be tackled *en passant*. This exclusion is understandable, for film studies is certainly a highly technical, oftentimes abstruse, theoretically heterogeneous and methodologically challenging field of study. All the same, its absence is striking in a book whose declared objective is to 'revitalize visual research' as a central concern of the social sciences and cultural studies by emphasising that 'visual research is not just about *the* photograph or conducted *through* the photograph' but, more inclusively, 'the study of the visible domains of social life and the visual languages and sign systems through which we communicate with each other' (pp. 229, 230).

To complain on this account would be churlish, however, for this book is otherwise impressively comprehensive, engaging *via* visual analysis with themes, theories and approaches of wider sociological application in order to bring the study of visual cultures from the disciplinary margins back into the mainstream. The first two chapters argue the case for visual research as a 'powerful and theoretically driven dimension of social and cultural inquiry' (p. 55), and review current trends in visual analysis. Then follows consideration of a range of two-dimensional visual data (not only photographs and advertisements, the conventional mainstay of visual analysis, but also signs, maps and other types of representation), approached from different methodological stances (semiotics, ethnomethodology, content analysis, cultural analysis). Chapter 4 considers 'three-dimensional visual data'—a range of everyday material objects such as houses, cars, statues, graffiti, rubbish, etc., while the following chapter looks at places and settings, and people's movement through different spaces. Finally, the authors turn their attention to the signifying qualities of the human body (clothing, gesture, display, etc.) as factors in social interactions.

Throughout the Emmison/Smith book—and this, to my mind, is its special merit—the authors cite numerous case studies and worked-out examples on the

basis of which they suggest a number of hands-on student research projects—large and small, individual and collective, sublime and ridiculous. True, the assumed and naturalised material and cultural setting of these exercises is the post-modern Anglo-American university campus, but this surely adds to the challenge of adapting, innovating, perhaps also critiquing, current theories and methods of visual analysis in a different cultural environment such as ours in south Asia.

Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi PATRICIA UBEROI

T. SCARLETT EPSTEIN, A.P. SURYANARAYANA and T. THIMMEGOWDA, *Village voices: Forty years of rural transformation in South India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998. 242 pp. Figures, plates, appendices, glossary. Rs 375 (hardback)/ Rs 195 (paperback).

The approach to rural development has undergone a sea change, shifting from a narrow focus on macro-economic stabilisation to a comprehensive framework encompassing all aspects of the economy, including social and environmental issues and poverty reduction. An important lesson learnt from the development experience is that growth does not trickle down as desired. Moreover, the processes of rural development have failed to address human needs directly; nor have they been socially inclusive.

The present volume, based on intensive fieldwork in three phases between 1954–56, 1970 and 1996–97, examines forty years of rural transformation in two villages of South India. A collaborative effort of three leading scholars, this absorbing account enables a better understanding of the relations between higher castes and lower castes and classes, land owners, tenants and agricultural workers, as well as patterns of social change due to agricultural diversification and the introduction of irrigation. Many changes in rural society discussed by the authors can be a source of satisfaction, for instance, social mobility, increased wealth and education, politicisation and decreasing caste discrimination, etc. Yet, feelings of regret for lost opportunities remain. Not only persistent poverty and illiteracy, but the continued growth of communalism, the rapid erosion of moral and civic values, and the decline in family solidarity threatening the welfare of children, women and the aged, are matters of deep concern.

Increasing emphasis on individualism, consumerism and market relationships has jeopardised family and community values. There is increasing alienation of rural youth, first from these basic institutions and then from their own self-identity. The dimension of social alienation in rural India is evident from the growing incidence of peasant suicide, caste and ethnic tensions and violent movements by marginalised groups such as the Dalits. However, while the forces of Green Revolution in the 1980s and of globalisation later on make it impossible to restore the damaged community structures and relationships of traditional

rural India, Epstein and her team of researchers could have paid more attention to the role of the community as a social unit that may play a significant part in resolving social problems. The reader is benefitted from the concluding chapter which discusses the future prospects of rural transformation in South India vis-à-vis India as a whole. The empirical accounts of the tremendous changes in the two studied villages help to create awareness on social issues like population and development, growing water shortage, and the role of women and education which, along with democratic decentralisation, should be focal concerns for the success of rural development from below.

In sum, the book offers excellent reading for academics and students of rural development studies. Additionally, voluntary organisations and public servants in the field of rural development will benefit immensely from the availability of a documentary film of the same title.

M.D. University, Rohtak S.R. AHLAWAT

VANDANA MADAN, ed., *The village in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2002. x + 477 pp. Tables, figures, notes, references, index. Rs 650 (hardback).

At a time when agrarian and rural studies are being marginalised, a book on 'The Village in India' is welcome. But, this edited volume is a compilation of several well-known essays and charts no new terrain in the field. The first set of essays by Dumont, Srinivas, Cohn, Bailey, and T.N. Madan can all be considered 'classic' essays that laid the foundation for understanding rural India. Similarly, the ones by Béteille, Chakravarti, Hardiman, Mencher and Gould emphasise the role of class, caste and power relations, the predicament of tribals, landless labourers and the functioning of the Jajmani system, and have been incorporated into the literature since at least the past two decades. Dreze's essay on Palanpur remains one of the first to combine economic and social issues and documents changes over a period of thirty-seven years in a village in UP. Similarly, Karin Kapadia's work encapsulates women's economic contribution within the larger agricultural economy and is a seminal contribution. The other essays by Mencher, and Dube date to 1970 and 1958 respectively and are now part of the older corpus of literature; they are in many ways well-worn and even dated. Susan Wadley's work on Karimpur is unusual in that it is a continuation of the work of the Wisers in Karimpur, hence representing anthropological research in the same village for over sixty years. However, Wadley relies on the 'ethnosociology of India' approach and provides a detailed slice of life in Karimpur without contextualising the larger political and economic structures within which it exists. Vandana Madan could have engaged with these texts a bit more or sought to have included essays that represent trends such as the increasing commercialisation of agriculture in different parts of India, growing caste-related violence, shifting gender relations, and the new urban–rural links that are reconstituting

village India. A new volume on Indian villages should have been seen as bringing continuity to the *Village India* volume edited by McKim Marriott and to the Breman et al. edited volume, *The Asian village revisited*. In fact, Vandana Madan's oversight of Kerala, Karnataka and Punjab itself is inexplicable as these states represent some novel trends in rural India, such as, respectively, the impact of large-scale out-migration, the rise of new peasant movements; and the impact of the success and failure of the Green Revolution and the secessionist movement. If these issues are not represented or captured in more recent studies, then it probably reflects the failure of scholarship to respond to and reflect on the more contemporary conditions of rural India. In fact, Madan's introduction itself summarises the perspectives of the selected studies and provides no broad overview of the current conditions, nor does it raise questions about the paucity of such literature. However, as the volume does comprise some key essays, it may be useful to the specialist scholar or student, or to those in search of some of the 'classic' essays.

National Institute of Advanced Studies A.R. VASAVI
Bangalore

SARASWATI RAJU, PETER J. ATKINS, NARESH KUMAR and JANET G. TOWNSEND. *Atlas of men and women in India*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1999. 131 pp. Tables, figures, maps, plates, notes, appendices. Rs 1200.

As its title suggests, *Atlas of men and women in India* is the outcome of scholarship in the relatively more recent field of feminist geography. Structured with the aid of maps, tables and photographs, this colourful coffee-table sized Atlas was produced to 'celebrate' fifty years of Indian Independence, with financial support from the Department for International Development of the UK in India.

The team of Indian and British geographers who are its authors have set themselves the task of depicting what it means to be a boy and a girl, man and woman across the districts of the country, by converting existing data sets (overwhelmingly drawn from the Census of India) into large colour coded maps that illustrate the many ways in which the nation is gendered. The themes addressed have been divided as follows: basic demographic information about the people of India; issues of population growth, urban–rural distribution and poverty; work, agriculture, crafts, manufacturing and services; literacy and education; marriage, life and death; power, and environment for living. With gender differences as the main variable between the time periods 1981 to 1991, map after map depicts 'how many' women and girls are present in different age groups, across a range of occupations, in and out of school, how many are married, how many are born and when they die, how many vote and what fuels they use.

The strength of the Atlas is the simplicity and clarity with which statistical facts are presented—what would otherwise be extraordinarily cumbersome and

involve huge tables is made pictorially accessible, so that patterns can be easily assimilated and compared visually. Taking the district rather than the state as the unit of analysis makes it possible to see how 'regions' take shape when women are the focus—whether it be the proportion of all women and girls who work on the land, their numbers in factories or workshops, the average age at which they get married and the proportion who are single, and so on. These regions do not match state boundaries in any direct way. At the same time, the significance of 'regions' for shaping gender relations has been emphasised by showing, for instance, how the child sex ratio (the number of girl children per 1,000 boys) exhibits very similar regional patterns both for Scheduled Castes and for the rest of the population. We learn that it is only where Scheduled Tribes are a significantly large group in a particular district that gender patterns are different, otherwise they appear to follow the dominant gender trends of a given region.

While this Atlas must have found users amongst those looking for an attractive and easy guide to current statistics, it appears to have unnecessarily reduced its task to providing descriptions, with large photographs taking up space that might productively have been devoted to a more detailed analyses of trends, or to discussions of the literature on the subject. After all, it is not for nothing that 'gender' has become the focus of attention for scholars, activists, state agencies, NGOs and international donors, and it is not clear why existing scholarship could not have been drawn upon more explicitly. Although the title of the book promises to be about both men and women, women are its central focus (though often in terms of their proportionate presence in a given category), so that full comparisons are not always possible. It is also a pity that the category of 'religious community' is not drawn upon at all, considering that the Census does offer some disaggregated data by religion.

Even so, this Atlas will be valuable to social scientists, activists and professionals interested in gender. The authors might consider an expanded edition once detailed data from the 2001 Census becomes available.

Women's Studies Programme MARY E. JOHN
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

SANJAY SRIVASTAVA, *Constructing post-colonial India: National character and the Doon School*. London: Routledge, 1998. xii + 259 pp. Tables, figures, plates, notes, appendices, bibliography, index.

This is an extremely clever and well-written book about the cultural context within which the Doon School seeks to establish a national identity, located in the space and time of the post-colonial moment. Srivastava provides a broad sweep of this cultural context, drawing on vast data sources, including Hindi films and literature, biographies, personal letters, interviews with former students

of the school, teachers, students, some parents, well-wishers and patrons of the school archives. Working on this large canvas, Srivastava seeks to link (*i*) the social and political contexts of a newly independent India, aspiring to establish itself as a 'modern' society based on a scientific and rational outlook, with (*ii*) the role of a school like the Doon School in creating this 'new' mind and 'ideal' citizen.

Srivastava is confident of his theoretical position, which he sets apart from earlier work in the sociology of education. He argues that he moves away from a focus on 'class dynamics', as central to schooling practices, to 'the cultural terrain on which the Indian dialogue of citizenship is carried out' (p. 11). This is indeed the crux of his analysis of the Doon School: how the 'ideas of culture, morality, the cult of manliness, and the magical and immutable qualities of heredity were . . . adopted and adapted by an indigenous intelligentsia towards its own circuits of power' (p. 6). It is not clear, however, how Srivastava distinguishes between the dynamics of culture and that of class, for surely the two are deeply enmeshed in the making and shaping of this national identity. In fact, throughout the analysis, Srivastava emphasises the exclusionary tactics of the social networks established through the class that is dominant at the Doon School, whether this is the middle class from provincial Punjab, who drew their capital from a heady mix of science, nature and modernity, or its later incarnation as the 'metropolitan imaginary' that is constructed 'through an articulation of its "negatives" and a conscious strategy of delineation' (p. 189). Thus, apart from its cultural manifestations, class as a social, political and economic category is critical to Srivastava's framework and it is surprising that he chooses to deny an explicit consideration of its role in the creation and reproduction of a particular social and cultural identity.

The voices present in Srivastava's analysis tell us about the vision and commitment of a particular set of people bent on establishing a class position through the acquisition or conversion of different forms of capital as well as through education at an institution that is modelled on colonial institutions and thereby different from native, traditional, and also feudal structures. At the same time, there is an arrogance in the voices of these people—who see themselves as the leading lights of a 'modern' and 'contemporary' education. Perhaps Srivastava needed to draw our attention more strongly to the fact that, although these voices may claim a sacred and special space for the Doon School, it remains a commonplace institution, indeed like many other public schools in India, in its enactment of such rituals as the morning assembly, the science exhibition, the sports day, and so on. These mundane and commonplace rituals appear 'special' to a particular institution, essentially because they re-affirm the sense of community, identity and selfhood that is common to class-based notions of appropriate or ideal citizenship. While Doon School, unlike the Mayo College, as Srivastava seeks to establish, may imagine itself as a role model in terms of the particular post-colonial, national identity it set out to construct and reproduce, this was

surely the goal of many other public schools in a changing, developing India. Srivastava also tends to ignore the place of co-educational public schools and girls' schools in his exploration of this theme. How does the Doon School represent the prototype (or 'chronotope', as Srivastava insists) of the scientific, rational man? It is just that a particular social class provided the legitimate socio-cultural space and time as a magnificient launching pad for the Doon School, and continued to support and provide it with sustenance, thereby giving it a head start in the game of post-colonial reconstruction and identity formation.

How then does the Doon School provide a significantly 'different' space for the production of a 'new' identity and a civilising notion of citizenship for the post-colonial, upper-class male child entering adulthood? One set of answers might emerge from a close examination of the pedagogic practices that are crucial for the fulfilment of institutional goals. These pedagogic practices are reflected in part in pedagogic encounters that may take place not only in the space and location of the classroom but also in more significant arenas such as the house and the sports field, but these are not the focus of Srivastava's interest, a point he notes in the book's opening pages. Similarly, the goals and ambitions of the Doon School, as Srivastava's work clearly shows us, are embedded in patriarchal intent and purpose, and this aspect remains disappointingly unquestioned, except briefly in the penultimate chapter of the book.

Srivastava has undoubtedly made a significant contribution to our understanding of the critical role of culture and location in the construction, development and reproduction of male, 'national', class-specific identities through an educational institution like the Doon School. However, we also need to understand the class dynamics as well as the pedagogic practices that engender such constructions. Otherwise, we are seeing only a partial picture through a framework that lays claim to greater theoretical insights than it is able to sustain.

Department of Sociology MEENAKSHI THAPAN
University of Delhi

ADITI MUKHERJEE and DUGGIRALA VASANTA, eds, *Practice and research in literacy* (Research in Applied Linguistics, vol. 5). New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002. 263 pp. Tables, figures, notes, references, index. Rs 280 (paperback).

This book is an outcome of a national symposium on literacy that took place at the Centre of Advanced Study in Linguistics at Osmania University, Hyderabad during February 1998. It attempts to bring together the experiences of various groups directly involved with literacy programmes in the country; and on the other hand, it also provides space for discussion on literacy from various theoretical perspectives.

The book is accordingly divided into two parts. The first part, entitled 'Theoretical perspectives on literacy, society, language and education' contains five

papers. The contributors in this section make several points. One, there exists a multiplicity of literacy practices. The local literacy practices that are embedded in their cultural and environmental contexts are the most useful to people. In contrast, the practices associated with the western or urban societies tend to marginalise and deny the local experiences. This point is further supported by the author's experience and analysis of the three case studies of Iran, South Africa and India (Street). Two, there is no need to draw a distinction between literacy and education. Further, a literacy or education programme can be considered successful only if it is able to bring about social transformation. From this perspective it paints a dismal picture of the achievements of the various literacy and primary education programmes going on in the country (Agnihotri). Three, though there is a need to include both the State language and the local vernaculars in an interactive way, learners and the local teachers in various parts of the country are not willing to accept literacy and education through local dialects alone (Mukherjee). Four, there is a need to link the oral cultures with the literate cultures (Khoobchandani). Finally, for a literacy programme to be successful, it is equally important to address issues such as poverty (Saxena).

The second part of the book, entitled 'Literacy practices: Pedagogy and evaluation' contains ten papers. In general, various contributors discuss in varying detail their experiences, assessment and analyses of the total literacy campaigns (TLC) and other related educational programmes launched in various parts of the country, particularly Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and to some extent West Bengal.

As many as eight papers analyse their experience with respect to the TLC under the aegis of national literacy mission (NLM) that became a model for the entire nation after its phenomenal success in Kerala. The programme was subsequently launched in other parts of the country, namely Pondicherry, Dakshin Kannada and Bijapur districts of Karnataka, parts of Andhra Pradesh and subsequently in various northern states of the country where it was far less successful. It is important to mention that while some contributors have tried to emphasise the failure of the TLC (Saxena, in Part I), several papers in Part II provide an objective analysis of the causes for its varying degrees of success and failure in different parts of the country. While one contributor (Mishra) provides a detailed sketch of the TLC and its objectives, the other (Krishna Kumar and Sankaran) help understand the very evolution of TLC and NLM, what made the literacy programme in Kerala a big success, and the role and the evolution of several important organisations such as Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ) and finally the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS). These and several other contributors (Mishra, Ravindran, Rao and Rao, Krishna Kumar and Sankaran) agree that it was factors such as the gradual but increasing bureaucratisation and centralisation of the NLM, standardisation of the approach and its mechanical implementation that were responsible for its failure. Thus it is not the TLC itself but the factors extraneous to it that were responsible for its varying degrees of failure. Two contributors in this section point out the

shortcomings in the pedagogical aspects of the literacy programmes in West Bengal (Bandopadhyay) and Andhra Pradesh (Swarajya Lakshmi). Vasanta, Gupta and Devi discuss the issue of social impact of literacy and, in fact, consider the anti-arrack agitation in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh partly as an instance of the social impact of the literacy. Sen discusses the experience of Rupantar, an NGO, in successfully carrying out the literacy programme in Chhattisgarh using the local vernacular during 1990–92. Despite its initial success, the programme, however, could not be continued beyond 1992. Of the two remaining papers, one discusses the experience of three NGOs in using REFLECT, an innovative approach to adult education and empowerment, in some of the tribal villages of Andhra Pradesh. The other contributor (Sachdeva) tries to put together several of his personal experiences with reference to literacy programmes.

One general problem with most of the papers is that they fail to provide sufficient information and details, making it difficult to understand and appreciate their experiences. The reason apparently is the association of the contributors with TLC and other programmes; hence they assume their readers to be familiar with the necessary details. A more carefully written introduction and better organisation of the papers could have avoided the problem. Some of the papers could have been more focused . One also cannot resist noticing the conspicuous absence of any reference to the seven other states/UTs that have literacy rates above 70 per cent. Similarly, as many as thirteen states/UTs have literacy rates between 52 per cent and 65 per cent. Only nine states/UTs have literacy rates below 50 per cent as per the 1991 census. This suggests that the literacy rates are not evenly distributed across the country. Therefore, each state/UT needs to be analysed individually to understand the causes behind the success or failure of the programmes. Nevertheless, the book is a welcome contribution to the subject of literacy as it brings together information on various aspects of the literacy programmes, in particular TLC and the role of various government and non-government agencies involved with the literacy mission in India.

Department of Linguistics
University of Delhi

SHOBHA SATYANATH

PREMA CLARKE, *Teaching and learning: The culture of pedagogy*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001. Figures, notes, references, bibliography, indexes. Rs 250 (paperback).

This is an important book that examines the relationship between teacher thinking and culture models in the quest to understand and establish the culture of pedagogy in Indian school classrooms. It is argued that these cultural models portray the larger goals and practices of education in India that do not subscribe to colonial ideologies but are embedded in a 'native pedagogical philosophy'. The author shows us how 'culture' powerfully and persuasively shapes teachers' explicit and implicit models of teaching that are embedded in four dominant cultural

constructs. These include 'holism as a shared worldview that encourages openness to regulation; hierarchical structure as a regulative social framework; knowledge as discovered and attested collectively; and the 'sense of duty' that defines the role of teacher (and student)'. Through case studies of teachers, students and classroom processes, conducted in private and government schools in the city of Bangalore, the author draws comparisons in the teaching of Mathematics and Social Studies. She differentiates between 'self-expressed reflective models' and 'acted-out praxis models' in the communication of knowledge, and concludes that by and large students are being socialised into a culture of learning in India that emphasises receptivity rather than inquiry. The author offers strategies for reform in teaching and learning that include a movement from 'indigenization' to greater 'contexualisation' not only in terms of making education relevant to local contexts, but also with reference to analysing existing practices that need to be transformed to ensure quality learning. In conclusion, it is suggested that curricular and examination reform are as important as reforms in teacher education, so that teachers are facilitated to 'unravel the connections between their thoughts and actions, their cultural models, and the cultural meaning system in which they live'.

Department of Sociology
University of Delhi

MEENAKSHI THAPAN

INDRAMANI SINGH and RAJA PARASURAMAN, eds, *Human cognition: A multidisciplinary perspective*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998. 372 pp. Tables, figures, references, indexes. Rs 425 (hardback).

This book is a collection of fifteen selected papers from the First International Symposium on Cognition held at Benaras in December 1993. It understands 'human' cognition as 'cognitive science [which] reflects the influence of experimental psychology, computer science and neuroscience (p. 16)'. The word *multidisciplinary* in the subtitle has to be read as denoting the interaction between these three 'scientific' disciplines. In no way can the discourse of cognitive science allow social/cultural intervention except as a variable deployed to prove the underlying neurobiological truth.

Though it claims to be presenting state-of-the-art data on cognitive science from America, Europe and South Asia, most of the recent materials cited here date from 1990–92! The book is divided into three sections: cognitive neuroscience, attention, memory, language and emotion; and application of cognitive models. From the viewpoint of scientific writing, all the chapters are thoroughly worked out and argue, with supporting experimental evidence, that one of the contemporary challenges for cognitive psychology lies in working out Artificial Intelligence.

As a whole, this book is a good overview of the cotemporary concepts in cognitive science and will cater a range of professionals like psychologists, psychiatrists and neurolinguists as a handy reference.

Social Science & Mental Health Journal AMIT RANJAN BASU
Kolkata

ALFRED R. LINDESMITH, ANSELM L. STRAUSS and NORMAN K. DENZIN. *Social psychology*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999. xii + 475 pp. Tables, figures, references, glossary, index, 8th edition. $29.95 (paperback).

Sociologists who are in an initial stage of involvement with social psychology may find this book useful in guiding them to complex issues. This oldest social psychology text in the USA (first ed. 1949) is extensively revised and updated in a user-friendly format. One-third of this edition is new and includes sections on cultural studies and the narrative turn, identity politics, cinematic society, postmodern theories, technologies of power and studies on bodies.

The book is thematically organised in four parts: the social psychological imagination, social structure and language, childhood socialization, and selves and societies. These themes are detailed into fifteen chapters, which end with suggested readings and study questions. It is written lucidly in a symbolic interactionist framework, which the authors think 'offers the social sciences the most sensitive theory of mind, self, and reflexive conduct' (p. xii). Symbolic interactionists approach their materials from a narrative, textual position, understanding that their texts create the subject matter they write about.

In spite of its interactionist bias, the book is balanced in representing a range of concepts that has emerged in the last decades of the last century. Particularly interesting is the last part on selves and societies, which deals with contemporary critical issues like cinematic representations, selves and the transformation of identities, sexualities, deviant bodies and medical bodies.

For Indian social psychologists, this book can provide food for thought to conceptualise our situation if a critical reading is pursued.

Social Science & Mental Health Journal AMIT RANJAN BASU
Kolkata

ZARINE COOPER, *Archaeology and history. Early settlements in the Andaman islands*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002. xv + 205 pp. Tables, figures, plates, maps, appendices, bibliography, index. Rs 625 (hardback).

The eight chapters of this magnificent study unfold the story of a great archaeologist going about her business in the Andaman Islands. Business, because for

the (archaeological) cognoscenti Cooper is a family name. Her work in these islands started as early as 1985, and she already has no less than a dozen publications on her research there. This book therefore benefits somewhat from the research done earlier, as from the archival inputs that have apparently gone into this book.

But what is the defence, for 'archaeology as history'? The introduction casts light on this question: '. . . the Andaman islanders are important in the Asian context, because their identification by some scholars as "Negritos" has provided a major support for a hypothesized early prehistoric settlement of the region' (p. 1). It may be deduced, therefore, that she approaches the pre-colonial history of the islanders to glean from it the pre-contact economic and social patterns.

In Ch. 1, she locates the history of anthropological research in these islands by E.H. Man (1880), A.J. Ellis (1882), M.V. Portman (1899), Radcliffe-Brown (1909, 1922) while Haughton and Stoliczka (1870), etc., are associated more specifically with the finds of the earliest lithic assemblages. However, no excavation in this period was systematically recorded, and in fact the precise dating of the material from excavations was never done. This is what modern archaeological research in these islands tries to do.

Recent research on the Andamans, i.e., Dutta (1962, 1978) and Ota (1986), have both involved excavations. In both cases, however, no C14 dating was done. In the latter case, discoveries included shells, faunal remains, as that of crabs, fish and a few fragmentary bones, identified as belonging to *Sus scrofa*. A red-ware was also found. Within the orbit of a general reconstruction of culture history, there are two areas of particular interest of Cooper: 'the development of the ceramic tradition and stone and glass technology' (p. 4). This is the essential point for potential historian-archaeologists to take note: archaeologists take recourse to history, not simply to reconstruct the past of the studied group for its own sake, but to glean from it facts pertinent to an archaeological study of settlement, technology, etc.

Ch. 2 gives us an overview of the recent history of the Andaman Islands. There is a plethora of early anthropological texts as well as travellers' accounts. These speak of frequent contacts between 'outsiders' and the indigenous Andamanese. However, except for a brief discussion of the trade routes of this region and the development of slavery and piracy, she gives us very little history about the dialectic between the visitors and the native response to them. However, since this would lead to social history the author is justified in avoiding this.

Ch. 3 contains an extensive discussion on the geomorphological aspects of the islands and describes the author's survey strategy as well as the materials existing in the study area. This includes a discussion of the ubiquitous shell middens, the Hava Beel cave on the Baratang Island of the Andaman cluster, the sediments therein, and the cave as a Jarawa campsite

Ch. 4 is concerned with Cooper's excavation at the Chauldari Midden. Of the middens and caves to be found in the various islands, the Chauldari Midden is

most outstanding. A trench 1.5 m wide and 4.5 m deep was taken particularly to understand the long-term changes in environment. The site evidences continuous habitation for a long time. Radiocarbon dates on the charred as well as uncharred shells at various depths at this site are, on the maximal side, 2280 +/– 90 B.P. Unbroken shells, including shell artifacts, number 7103 (34.5 kg), while fragments weigh 51 kg. Most interestingly for the archaeologists, she lists extensively the ethnographically recorded uses of shell and mollusc as tools.

Ch 5 is the ethnographically interesting part of the book, elucidating the Andaman islander's indigenous perceptions of their world. Perhaps something could have been said about the impact visitors to the islands had upon them. However, the author's only significant deduction is that, for archaeology, 'the culturally distinguishable units correspond to natural boundaries rather than linguistic tribal divisions' (p. 95). She records that 'five types of shelters are known to have been constructed by the Andaman islanders . . . in accordance with the duration of stay, at a particular camp . . . the people occupying it, and the principal activities that were meant to be carried out (Man 1883: 105-c)' (p. 77). She extends this description, further identifying the function of different types of encampments. This is ethnoarchaeologically a very important chapter.

In Ch. 6, the archaeological record is given a processualist dimension, in that Cooper sets out to examine the formation processes operating in these islands. She here refers to the historical background of the Andaman Islands in terms of material culture. She records that the Onge have been virtually inundated with cultural items that were quite alien to their way of life. While iron implements, glass bottles, etc., were freely distributed (presumably by 'outsiders'), metal was still a precious commodity. She records that such items have subsequently entered the midden sites. Ch. 7 deals with myths related to the origin of the Andaman islanders. These include the Wot-A-Emi myth, which situates the arrival of the first islanders. Indeed there is much by way of archaeological evidence at these sites, but the dates for these are quite recent. Indeed it seems there is a good contemporaneity of sites 1520 +/– 110 B.P. This chapter also contains a short section on the most likely racial affiliation of the islanders. Ch. 8 brings us to an end of this marvellous ethno-historical and ethnoarchaeological study. It concludes that the shell-middens form by far the largest category of archaeological sites, 'attesting to the existence of human habitation in all the . . . major islands of the Andaman group' (p. 164).

Thus we may conclude (*a*) that this is the first ever study of the material culture of the various tribes of the Andamans with an archaeological end in mind; and (*b*) the first ever proper archaeological survey of the area; and (*c*) that systematic excavations have been undertaken at Chauldari and other important sites, and prehistoric subsistence studied.

If these are the strengths of the book, on the flip-side the visual documentation is rather poor. In essence we have the islanders, sometimes bare-breasted, on the backdrop of the Indian Ocean: quite reminiscent of colonial photography.

Also there is a lack of pictures in which the islanders are shown clearly engaging in various economic activities.

Fellow, Indian Council for Historical Research AJAY PRATAP
New Delhi

K. SRINIVASAN, *Basic demographic techniques and applications*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997. 224 pp. Tables, figures, appendix, bibliography, glossary, index. Rs 295 (hardback).

This textbook describes the basic statistical techniques required to analyse and interpret demographic data. This book is divided into thirteen chapters. The subject matter dealt with in these chapters includes a discussion about basic concepts and measurements in demography, the demographic transition theory, compilation and presentation of demographic data sources, including the significance of population structure in explaining demographic processes, description of the basic measures of fertility, mortality and life table construction. A chapter each is devoted to standardisation techniques, nuptiality analysis, population projections and demographic models and model life tables. One chapter is devoted to description of different techniques to assess the quality of data. It describes the errors and biases commonly observed in demographic data of developing countries, the methods of assessing them and making adjustments for them.

The new features of the book are the two chapters devoted to evaluation of programmes, and applications in health policy and management. These two chapters discuss various frameworks for programme evaluation and the techniques used in them. The last chapter gives selected software packages in demography. This book has been primarily written for teaching a basic course in demographic techniques, but it is very useful for programme administrators, policy makers and scholars working in the fields of population stabilisation and family welfare programmes.

Institute of Economic Growth R.P. TYAGI
Delhi

Contributions to Indian Sociology

New Series

Indexes

Vols. 35–37 (2001–03)

I. AUTHORS' NAMES

Addlakha, Renu, 35 (2001): 151–79
Agarwal, Bina, 35 (2001): 389–99
Agrawal, Arun, 35 (2001): 181–212

Ballard, Roger, 37 (2003): 25–57
Banerjee, Madhulika, 36 (2002): 435–67
Bear, Laura, 35 (2001): 355–88
Biswas, Jhuma, 37 (2003): 281–310
Brosius, Christiane, 36 (2002): 265–95

Coppard, Daniel, 37 (2003): 281–310

De Haan, Arjan, 37 (2003): 189–215
De Neve, Geert, 37 (2003): 251–80

Freitag, Sandria B., 36 (2002): 365–97

Gardner, Katy, 37 (2003): v–xxviii
George, Glynis, 36 (2002): 495–524
Gidwani, Vinay, 37 (2003): 339–67
Guan, Yeoh Seng, 35 (2001): 33–64

Hardgrove, Anne, 36 (2002): 323–64

Jain, Kajri, 36 (2002): 33–70
Jassal, Smita Tewari, 35 (2001). 319–54
Jefferey, Craig J., 35 (2001): 213–35
Jefferey, Roger, 35 (2001): 213–35
Jefferey, Patricia, 35 (2001): 1–32; 213–35
John, Mary E., 35 (2001): 237–58

Kuhn, Randall, 37 (2003): 311–37

Lutgendorf, Philip, 36 (2002): 71–112

Meher, Rajkishor, 37 (2003): 429–57
Mitter, Partha, 36 (2002): 1–32

Nag, Dulali, 36 (2002): 525–49

Osella, Caroline, 37 (2003): 109–39
Osella, Filippo, 37 (2003): v–xxviii; 109–39

Parry, Jonathan P., 37 (2003): 217–49
Pinney, Christopher, 36 (2002): 113–50

Rafique, Abdur, 37 (2003): 281–310
Ramaswamy, Sumathi, 36 (2002): vii–xii; 151–89
Rana, Kumar, 37 (2003): 281–310
Roberts, Michael, 35 (2001): 65–96
Rogaly, Ben, 37 (2003): 281–310
Roy, Anupama, 36 (2002): 469–93
Roy, Srirupa, 36 (2002): 233–63

Säävälä, Minna, 35 (2001): 293–318
Sengupta, Amrita, 37 (2003): 281–310
Sharma, K.L., 37 (2003): 405–27
Simpson, Edward, 37 (2003): 83–108
Sinha, Vineeta, 37 (2003). 459–94
Sivaramakrishnan, K., 37 (2003): 339–67

Spencer, Jonathan, **37** (2003): 1–23

Taylor, Woodman, **36** (2002): 297–322
Tenhunen, Sipra, **37** (2003): 495–518
Thangarajah, C Y., **37** (2003): 141–62

Uberoi, Patricia, **36** (2002). 191–232
Unnithan-Kumar, Maya, **37** (2003): 163–88

Watkins, Francis, **37** (2003)· 59–81

II. TITLES OF ARTICLES, REVIEW ARTICLES, SHORT COMMUNICATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH AUTHORS' NAMES (VOL. 37)

Calcutta's labour migrants. Encounters with modernity (Arjan de Haan), 37 (2003): 189–215.

A case of capital-rich under-development: The paradoxical consequences of successful transnational entrepreneurship from Mirpur (Roger Ballard), 37 (2003). 25–57.

Circular migration and rural cosmopolitanism in India (Vinay Gidwani and K Sivaramakrishnan), 37 (2003): 339–67.

Culture and political agency. Gender, kinship and village politics in West Bengal (Sipra Tenhunen), 37 (2003): 495–518.

Expectations and rewards of modernity: Commitment and mobility among rural migrants in Tirupur, Tamil Nadu (Geert De Neve), 37 (2003): 251–80.

Identities in motion. Social exchange networks and rural-urban migration in Bangladesh (Randall Kuhn), 37 (2003): 311–37.

Merging 'different' sacred spaces: Enabling religious encounters through pragmatic utilization of space? (Vineeta Sinha), 37 (2003): 459–94.

Migration and Islamic reform in a port town of western India (Edward Simpson), 37 (2003): 83–108.

Migration and the commoditisation of ritual: Sacrifice, spectacle and contestations in Kerala, India (Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella), 37 (2003): 109–39.

Migration, modernity and social transformation in South Asia: An overview (Katy Gardner and Filippo Osella), 37 (2003): v–xxviii.

A nation 'living in different places' Notes on the impossible work of purification in postcolonial Sri Lanka (Jonathan Spencer), 37 (2003). 1–23.

Nehru's dream and the village 'waiting room': Long-distance labour migrants to a central Indian steel town (Jonathan P. Parry), 37 (2003): 217–49.

'Save there, eat here': Migrants, households and community identity among Pakhtuns in northern Pakistan (Francis Watkins), 37 (2003)· 59–81.

Seasonal migration, employer-worker interactions, and shifting ethnic identities in contemporary West Bengal (Ben Rogaly, Daniel Coppard, Kumar Rana, Abdur Rafique, Amrita Sengupta and Jhuma Biswas), 37 (2003): 281–310

The social and ecological effects of industrialisation in a tribal region: The case of the Rourkela Steel Plant (Rajkishor Meher), 37 (2003): 429–57.

The social organisation of urban space. A case study of Chanderi, a small town in central India (K.L Sharma), 37 (2003): 405–27

Spirits of the womb· Migration, reproductive choice and healing in Rajasthan (Maya Unnithan-Kumar), 37 (2003): 163–88.

Veiled constructions: Conflict, migration and modernity in eastern Sri Lanka (C.Y. Thangarajah), 37 (2003): 141–62

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES (VOL. 37)

Anthropological explorations in gender: Intersecting fields by **Leela Dube** (Nilika Mehrotra), 37 (2003): 391–93.

Archaeology and history. Early settlements in the Andaman islands by **Zarine Cooper** (Ajay Pratap), 37 (2003): 549–52.

Atlas of men and women in India by **Saraswati Raju, Peter J. Atkins, Naresh Kumar and Janet G. Townsend** (Mary E. John), 37 (2003): 542–43.

Basic demographic techniques and applications by **K. Srinivasan** (R.P. Tyagi), 37 (2003): 552.

Beyond Hindu and Muslim: Multiple identity in narratives from village India by **Peter Gottschalk** (Sasheej Hegde), 37 (2003): 375–77.

Children of colonialism: Anglo-Indians in a postcolonial world by **Lionel Caplan** (Rowena Robinson), 37 (2003): 387–88.

Collected essays by **M.N. Srinivas** (N. Jayaram), 37 (2003): 521–23.

Community and identities: Contemporary discourses on culture and politics in India ed. by **Surinder S. Jodhka** (Nissim Mannathukkaren), 37 (2003): 531–33.

Constructing post-colonial India: National character and the Doon School by **Sanjay Srivastava** (Meenakshi Thapan), 37 (2003): 543–45.

Culture, space and the nation state: From sentiments to structure by **Dipankar Gupta** (Kushal Deb), 37 (2003): 527–29.

Cultural pasts: Essays in early Indian history by **Romila Thapar** (Rajan Gurukkal), 37 (2003): 384–87.

Decolonization of French India: Liberation movement and Indo-French relations 1947–1954 by **Ajit K. Neogy** (D. Sundaram), 37 (2003). 535–37.

Democratic governance in India: Challenges of poverty, development and identity ed. by **Niraja Gopal Jayal and Sudha Pai** (Jos Mooij), 37 (2003): 377–79.

The emergence of Hindu nationalism in India by **John Zavos** (T.N. Madan), 37 (2003): 371–75.

The expanding landscape: South Asians and the diaspora ed. by **Carla Petievich** (Aparna Rayaprol), 37 (2003): 389–90.

Fertility and familial power relations: Procreation in south India by **Minna Säävälä** (Leela Visaria), 37 (2003): 400–2.

For the solution of the 'caste' question, Buddha is not enough, Ambedkar is not enough either, Marx is a must by **Ranganayakamma** (Satendra Kumar), 37 (2003). 383.

Gender and the social construction of illness by **Judith Lorber** (Mala Kapur Shankardass), 37 (2003): 404.

Gender, religion and 'Heathen Lands': American missionary women in South Asia (1860s–1940s) by **Maina Chawla Singh** (Mrinalini Sebastian), 37 (2003): 395–97.

Handbook of visual analysis ed. by **Theo van Leeuwen and D. Carey Jewitt** (Patricia Uberoi), 37 (2003): 537–39.

Health, medicine and empire: Perspectives on colonial India ed by **Biswamoy Pati** and **Mark Harrison** (Maina Chawla Singh), 37 (2003): 398–400.
Human cognition: A multidisciplinary perspective ed. by **Indramani Singh** and **Raja Parasuraman** (Amit Ranjan Basu), 37 (2003): 548–49.

Indian traffic. Identities in question in colonial and postcolonial India by **Parama Roy** (Aparna Rayaprol), 37 (2003): 389–90.

Kerala's demographic transition: Determinants and consequences ed. by **K.C. Zachariah** and **S. Irudaya Rajan** (R P. Tyagi), 37 (2003)· 403–4.

Oh terrifying mother: Sexuality, violence and worship of the goddess Kali by **Sarah Caldwell** (Nilika Mehrotra), 37 (2003): 397–98.
Orientalism and religion· Postcolonial theory, India and 'the mystic east' by **Richard King** (T.N. Madan), 37 (2003): 371–75.

Perpetual mourning: Widowhood in rural India by **Martha Alter Chen** (Uma Chakravarti), 37 (2003): 393–95.
Practice and research in literacy (Research in Applied Linguistics, vol. 5) ed by **Aditi Mukherjee** and **Duggirala Vasanta** (Shobha Satyanath), 37 (2003)· 545–47.

Researching the visual: Images, objects, contexts and interactions in social and cultural inquiry ed. by **Michael Emmison** and **Philip Smith** (Patricia Uberoi), 37 (2003): 537–39.
Reversing the gaze. Amar Singh's diary, a colonial subject's narrative of imperial India ed. by **Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, Lloyd I. Rudolph** and **Mohan Singh Kanota** (Purnendu S. Kavoori), 37 (2003): 533–35.

Social psychology by **Alfred R. Lindesmith, Anselm L. Strauss** and **Norman K. Denzin** (Amit Ranjan Basu), 37 (2003): 548–49.
Sociology: Essays on approach and method by **André Béteille** (Sujata Patel), 37 (2003): 523–25.
Symbolic heat: Gender, health and worship among the Tamils of south India and Sri Lanka by **Dennis B. McGilvray** (Ruby Bhardwaj), 37 (2003): 403.

Teaching and learning The culture of pedagogy by **Prema Clarke** (Meenakshi Thapan), 37 (2003): 547–48.
Technobrat: Culture in a cybernetic classroom by **Rukmini Bhaya Nair, Ramnik Bajaj** and **Ankur Meattle** (Deepthi S. Aradhya), 37 (2003)· 383–84.
Thinking social science in India: Essays in honour of Alice Thorner ed. by **Sujata Patel, Jasodhara Bagchi** and **Krishna Raj** (N. Jayaram), 37 (2003): 525–27.

Untouchable freedom: A social history of a dalit community by **Vijay Prashad** (Edward A. Rodrigues), 37 (2003): 379–83.

The village in India ed. by **Vandana Madan** (A.R. Vasavi), 37 (2003): 541–42.
Village voices: Forty years of rural transformation in South India by **T. Scarlett Epstein, A.P. Suryanarayana** and **T. Thimmegowda** (S.R. Ahlawat), 37 (2003): 540–41.
Visual culture: The reader ed. by **Jessica Evans** and **Stuart Hall** (Patricia Uberoi), 37 (2003): 537–39.

Also from Sage

French Feminism
An Indian Anthology

Editors

Danielle Haase-Dubosc, Mary E. John,
Marcelle Marini, Rama Melkote, Susie Tharu

French feminism has a long history stretching back at least to the Middle Ages, where we see women denouncing inequality and the unjust subordination of their sex. In the late 1960s and early 1970s of the twentieth century, however, one finds a radical break with the feminism that preceded it. Marked by a libertarian culture influenced by Marxism, socialism and psychoanalysis, the feminism that began in the 1970s rejected the reformist and legal vision of women's emancipation, politicized the private sphere, and demanded social and political equality.

This remarkable anthology of 36 texts, freshly translated for this volume, vividly maps the terrain of French feminism in its contemporary context from the 1970s onwards. Bringing together the seminal writings of both scholars and activists, the volume will help readers to grasp the questions, the challenges, and the progress of reflection. The essays are divided into eight sections.

- The Women's Liberation Movement in France
- Women and Creativity
- Writing History/Rewriting History
- Race, Class, Gender
- Legal Bodies/Women's Bodies
- Occupying/Capturing Political Space
- Feminists Defetishize Theory
- Feminist Mappings

Overall, this absorbing volume gives voice to the extraordinary range of contemporary French feminism. Each section is preceded by an introduction which places the contributions in their material and social contexts to show how French feminism has evolved in response to concrete struggles and institutional constraints as much as to sophisticated intellectual discourse

The Contributors: Catherine Bailteau • Simone de Beauvoir • Malika Bentaib • Marie-Jo Bonnet • Huguette Bouchardeau • Hélène Cixous • Françoise Collin • Françoise Dasques • Christine Delphy • Marie-Josèphe Dhavernas • Régine Dhoquois • Michèle le Doeuff • Françoise Gaspard • Olympe de Gouges • Colette Guillaumin • Danielle Haase-Dubosc • Helena Hirata • Luce Irigaray • Ghaiss Jasser • Danièle Kergoat • Claudie Lesselier • Marie-Victoire Louis • Marcelle Marini • Nicole-Claude Mathieu • Suzanne More • Michelle Perrot • Françoise Picq • Christine Planté • Michelle Riot-Sarcey • Hélène Rouch • Mariette Sineau • Beatrice Slama • Elizabeth Sledziewski • Jeanne Soquet • Gita Srinivasan • Eleni Varikas • Monique Wittig • Anne Zelinski

220 x 140 mm • Hb/Pb • 2003 • 448pp

SAGE Publications
New Delhi • Thousand Oaks • London

Notes for Contributors

1. Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate. Articles should be typed on A-4 bond paper and on one side only, double-spaced, with generous margins on all four sides. The length of an article should not ordinarily exceed 10,000 words. Articles should be accompanied by a 100–200 word abstract, typed in double space, and on a separate sheet Manuscripts should be submitted to The Editors, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi, Delhi 110 007, India Contributors must provide their affiliation *and* complete mailing address on a separate sheet
2. Footnotes should also be typed in double space, numbered serially, and appended at the end of the article, even though they will be printed at the foot of the relevant pages. Footnotes must contain more than a mere reference.
3. References should also be typed in double space at the end of the article. References in the text should follow the author–date system—for example, 'Shah (1960 60), or '(Shah 1960. 60)'. 'ibid.' (not italicised) can be used when a reference is repeated within the same paragraph Citations should appear alphabetically—for example, '(Shah 1960· 60, Uberoi 1979. 11; Wignaraja 1968. 12)', and multiple references of the same date for any one author should be distinguished thus '(Shah 1960a 60, 1960b· 80)'. The detailed style for referencing is·

   Barth, Fredrik, ed. 1978 *Scale and social organization* Oslo. Universitets-forlaget.

   Dube, S C. 1955 *Indian village*. London: Routledge

   Durkheim, Emile. 1915 *The elementary forms of the religious life* (trans Joseph Ward Swain) London. George Allen and Unwin.

   Geertz, Clifford. 1966 Religion as a cultural system. *In* M Banton, ed., *Anthropological approaches to the study of religion*, pp. 1–46. London. Tavistock.

   Reynolds, Frank E 1971. Buddhism and sacral kingship The case of Thailand. Ph D. dissertation, University of Chicago

   Srinivas, M.N. 1959 The dominant caste in Rampura. *American anthropologist* 61, 1: 1–16
4. British spellings to be used rather than American Thus, 'programme' not 'program'.
5. Single quote to be used throughout. Double quotes to be used only within single quotes. Quotations in excess of 45 words should be seperated from the text with a line space above and below and indented on the left. Quotes should be cited accurately from the original source, should not be edited, and should give the page numbers of the original publication.
6. Where alternative forms exist, use 's' in '-ise', '-isation' words
7. In the case of italicisation, authors are given latitude However, italicisation should be consistent and all unfamiliar foreign words should be in italics. The more familiar terms (especially to readers of *CIS*) and terms found in a standard dictionary should be in roman type—for example, 'yoga' but '*jagir*' When citing literature, italicise names of books and journals and specific editions of a particular work—for example, 'vedas', 'Koran' but '*Manavadharmashastra*'.
8. Capitalisation should be kept to the minimum and should be consistent Please note the use of capitals for the first word and for proper nouns but otherwise lower case letters in *all* references to books, journals and articles' names Names of castes should retain the capital letter '(Brahmin)', not so generic terms '(varna)'.
9. Diacritical marks are discretionary and not essential but should be consistent within the article. When not using diacriticals, the English spelling should be followed—for example, 'Shiva' or 'Śiva', not 'Siva'
10. Unless the entire sentence is part of the quote, the punctuation should remain outside the quote marks
11. Figures between one and ninety-nine should be spelt out, 100 and above should remain in figures. However, exact measurements and percentages are always expressed in figures—for example, '3 per cent', '6 km'.
12. Use '19th century' and 'the 1960s'.
13. Tables and Figures should be indicated by number '(Table 1)' not location '(as in the Figure above)'. Tables should contain a source and units of measurement. Figures provided with the manuscript should be of printable quality
14. Book reviews must provide the following details, and in this order: Name of author/Title of book reviewed/Place of publication/Publisher/Date of publication/Number of pages, in roman and arabic figures to include preliminary pages/Additional features such as figures, tables, notes, glossary, bibliography, index and price, where relevant.
15. For a more detailed stylesheet please write to Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd (E-mail: editors@indiasage.com; Tel/Fax: 91-11-26491290)

An Essential Reading

CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIAN SOCIOLOGY
OCCASIONAL STUDIES • 10

BEYOND APPEARANCES?
Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India

Editor: *Sumathi Ramaswamy*

A striking feature of modern-day society is the ubiquity of visuals and images in everyday life. According to metropolitan theorists, modernity is marked by the hegemony of vision, with everything being measured by its ability to show or be shown. But how does this linking of the visual to the modern stand up to scrutiny when placed within the contexts of the complicated picture-worlds, print-complexes and image-cultures of India? This is the principal question investigated by ***Beyond Appearances?*** The eleven essays in this book analyse the material and political impact of a wide array of artefacts, media and habits with the aim of understanding the principal contours of the visual practices and ideologies that distinguish ***an Indian modern.***

RECOGNISING the enormous power contained within the images to transform and mobilise self and community, the contributors focus on a variety of visual media including fine art and calendar art, theatre and popular cinema, photography, documentary films, and propaganda videos and maps.

OVERALL, this volume draws attention to the fact that the visual cannot be treated as a mere *supplement* to knowledge derived from written texts but constitutes a distinct field of substantive and theoretical enquiry. Multi-disciplinary, comprehensive and informative, this fascinating volume will be of interest to students and scholars in the fields of visual culture, sociology, anthropology, art history, political science and media studies.

CONTRIBUTORS: Christiane Brosius • Sandria B. Freitag • Anne Hardgrove • Kajri Jain • Philip Lutgendorf • Partha Mitter • Christopher Pinney • Sumathi Ramaswamy • Srirupa Roy • Woodman Taylor • Patricia Uberoi •

220 x 140mm • 412pages+plates • 2003 • Hardbound

SAGE Publications
New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London